



**EXPERIENTIAL TESTIMONIES
BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT
OF CHRIST**

VOLUME 2

THE CHURCH OF ALMIGHTY GOD



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1. How I Remedied My Lying

By Marinette, France

In the past I would lie and curry favor with people without a second thought, because I was afraid of disappointing or offending people by telling the truth. I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days in November 2018, and I learned from His words that He hates dishonest and deceitful people and likes pure and honest people. I decided to put God's words into practice and be an honest person, and after some practice, I became able to speak honestly most of the time. For example, when I was supposed to pay more than €50 for my medication but the pharmacist miscounted and took only half of that, I pointed out the mistake without even thinking. But it was harder to be honest when something impacted my reputation or personal interests.

One afternoon just as I was about to take a nap, my partner, Sister Susan, suddenly sent me a message telling me she wanted to chat about our work. I wasn't too happy to see her message because I was very busy, hadn't slept enough, was tired, and didn't want to discuss anything. I couldn't think about anything at the time except wanting to have a rest, but I didn't dare say that outright to Susan because I was afraid she would think that I was lazy and too concerned with physical comfort, and that she'd get a bad impression of me. So for the sake of my image, I just told her, "Sorry, I have an important appointment. I need to go see the doctor." The lie just came out without me even thinking about it. After lying to Susan, I felt so guilty that I didn't get any rest at all, and felt terrible all the time. God likes honest people. How could I lie so casually? Then how could I be trusted? I knew lying for my own physical comfort wasn't right, that God wouldn't like that, and that I should put the church's work first. I reached out to

Susan right away. She asked me if I was already back from my appointment. I didn't want to look bad in front of her and make her think I was a deceitful person, so I didn't tell her the truth and just kept lying, saying: "My doctor canceled in the end, she had to go to the vaccine clinic." Our conversation turned to work after that, but I felt a sense of accusation. I'd lied to her, then I didn't admit it, but kept lying. I saw how serious my satanic disposition was and I felt ashamed of myself. I could hardly look her in the eyes. So I hurried before God to reflect on myself, and in my reflection, I realized I was slippery a lot in my life. One time a leader asked me if I'd let Sister Joey know about a gathering that evening. I then realized I hadn't, but I didn't tell the leader the truth, wanting to protect her image of me. I lied, saying I'd just let her know a moment ago. Then I immediately sent Joey a message telling her about the gathering. Also, I generally went out to do grocery shopping every Friday morning, so I wouldn't have been able to join any last-minute gatherings then. But I didn't tell the truth, and told my leader that I had another gathering, or an appointment, and that was why I couldn't go. I was twisting things, being devious and deceptive just to protect her good image of me and make the leader think I was busy with my duty all the time. I saw I was nowhere near God's requirements for honesty. So I prayed, "Almighty God, I really regret my lying and deceit. I just can't stop lying to safeguard others' good image of me. I'm not an honest person at all. God, please guide me and help me understand the truth, to be freed from this corruption."

One day, I read this passage of God's words: **"In their everyday lives, people often talk nonsense, tell lies, and say things that are ignorant, foolish, and defensive. Most of these things are said for the sake of vanity and pride, to satisfy their own egos. Speaking such falsehoods reveals their corrupt dispositions. If you were to resolve these corrupt**

elements, your heart would be purified, and you would gradually become purer and more honest. In reality, people all know why they lie. For the sake of personal gain and pride, or for vanity and status, they try to compete with others and pass themselves off as something that they're not. However, their lies are eventually revealed and exposed by others, and they end up losing face, as well as their dignity and character. This is all caused by an excessive amount of lies. Your lies have become too numerous. Every word you say is adulterated and insincere, and not a single one can be considered true or honest. Even though you don't feel that you've lost face when you tell lies, deep down, you feel disgraced. Your conscience blames you, and you hold a low opinion of yourself, thinking, 'Why am I living such a pitiful life? Is it so difficult to speak the truth? Must I resort to lies for the sake of my pride? Why is my life so exhausting?' You don't have to live an exhausting life. If you can practice being an honest person, you will be able to live a relaxed, free, and liberated life. However, you have chosen to uphold your pride and vanity by telling lies. Consequently, you live a tiresome and miserable existence, which is self-inflicted. One may gain a sense of pride by telling lies, but what is that sense of pride? It is just an empty thing, and it is completely worthless. Telling lies means selling out one's character and dignity. It strips away one's dignity and one's character, and it displeases and disgusts God. Is this worthwhile? It is not. Is this the correct path? No, it is not. People who frequently lie live according to their satanic dispositions; they live under Satan's power. They do not live in the light, nor do they live in the presence of God. You constantly think about how to lie and then after you lie, you have to think about how to cover up that lie. And when you do not cover up the lie well enough and it is exposed, you have to rack your brain to try

and straighten out the contradictions and make it plausible. Is it not tiring to live in this way? Exhausting. Is it worth it? No, it is not worth it. Racking one's brain to tell lies and then to cover them up, all for the sake of pride, vanity, and status, what meaning is there in that? Finally, you reflect and think to yourself, 'What's the point? It's too exhausting to tell lies and to have to cover them up. Conducting myself in this manner won't work; it'd be easier if I just became an honest person.' You desire to become an honest person, but you cannot let go of your pride, vanity, and personal interests. Therefore, you can only resort to telling lies to uphold these things. ... If you think that lies can uphold the reputation, status, vanity, and pride you desire, you are completely mistaken. In reality, by telling lies, not only do you fail to maintain your vanity and pride, and your dignity and character, more grievously, you miss the opportunity to practice the truth and be an honest person. Even if you manage to protect your reputation, status, vanity, and pride at that moment, you have sacrificed the truth and betrayed God. This means you have completely lost your chance for Him to save and perfect you, which is the greatest loss and a lifelong regret” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). God's words described my state perfectly. I saw that I was being crooked and deceitful. When I just wanted to rest, I couldn't tell the truth about something so small. I didn't directly tell Susan that I needed a nap and that I would talk with her a little later, and I chose to lie instead. My motivation was to protect my face and status, to protect other people's image of me. God hates that kind of behavior, and I felt guilty about it. Just like God's words say: **“Even though you don't feel that you've lost face when you tell lies, deep down, you feel disgraced. Your conscience blames you, and you hold a low opinion of yourself,**

thinking, **‘Why am I living such a pitiful life? Is it so difficult to speak the truth? Must I resort to lies for the sake of my pride? Why is my life so exhausting?’**” I really identified with these words from God. Telling lies to protect my reputation was an exhausting way to live. I had to keep telling lies to cover up my initial lie. My conscience felt really accused after I lied, I regretted it and wept, and I felt ashamed of my lying. But then after the fact, I couldn’t help but keep telling more lies. It was so corrupt and shameful of me! Lying had already become my very nature. I remembered something the Lord Jesus said: **“Let your communication be, Yes, yes; No, no: for whatever is more than these comes of evil”** (Matthew 5:37). **“You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stayed not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it”** (John 8:44). It was true. My constant lying showed that I belonged to the devil, and I was doing it just to protect my own image and reputation. But that took away all my character and dignity. It was so foolish of me! God was hoping I would practice the truth and be an honest person, to bear witness for Him and shame Satan, but I was falling for Satan’s tricks, lying for the sake of my own vanity and reputation, deceiving the brothers and sisters, and becoming Satan’s laughingstock. My behavior disappointed God so much and wounded His heart. I wasn’t an honest person, and I was deceitful by nature.

Later, I read this in a passage of God’s words: **“You ought to know that God likes those who are honest. In essence, God is faithful, and so His words can always be trusted; His actions, furthermore, are faultless and unquestionable, which is why God likes those who are absolutely honest with Him. Honesty means giving your heart to God, being genuine with God in all things, being open with Him in all things, never**

hiding the facts, not trying to deceive those above and below you, and not doing things only to curry favor with God. In short, to be honest is to be pure in your actions and words, and to deceive neither God nor man” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). I saw that being honest means having no deceit in your heart, no lies on your tongue, and never cheating God or man in anything. I had often been devious and deceptive to protect my own image and interests. I was tired and wanted to take a nap, so I didn’t want to discuss church work with Susan right then, but to protect her image of me I lied to get out of the meeting. Even after I realized my mistake, I didn’t admit it right away, but instead kept lying. There was clearly some work I had not done but when my leader asked, I lied about just having done it. I told so many lies to protect my vanity and reputation and I saw I had a really crafty, deceitful nature. I couldn’t tell the truth even about the most basic things. I was so deeply corrupted by Satan. I wasn’t a remotely honest person.

There was another passage of God’s words that I read later on: **“Only if people seek to be honest can they know how deeply corrupted they are, whether or not they really have any human likeness, and clearly take their own measure or see their deficiencies. Only when they are practicing honesty can they become aware of how many lies they tell and how deeply hidden their deceit and dishonesty are. Only while having the experience of practicing being honest can people gradually come to know the truth of their own corruption and know their own nature essence, and only then will their corrupt dispositions be constantly purified. Only in the course of their corrupt dispositions being constantly purified will people be able to gain the truth. Take your time experiencing these words. God does not perfect those who are deceitful. If your heart is not honest—if you are not an honest**

person—then you will not be gained by God. Likewise, you will not gain the truth, and will also be incapable of gaining God. What does it mean if you do not gain God? If you do not gain God and you have not understood the truth, then you will not know God, and so there will be no way you can be compatible with God, in which case you are the enemy of God. If you are incompatible with God, God is not your God; and if God is not your God, you cannot be saved. If you do not seek to attain salvation, why do you believe in God? If you cannot attain salvation, you will forever be a bitter enemy of God, and your outcome will be set. Thus, if people wish to be saved, then they must start by being honest. In the end, those who are gained by God are marked with a sign. Do you know what it is? It is written in Revelation, in the Bible: ‘And in their mouth was found no lie; they are without blemish’ (Revelation 14:5). Who are ‘they’? They are those who are saved, perfected and gained by God. How does God describe these people? What are the characteristics and expressions of their conduct? They are without blemish. They speak no lies. You can probably all understand and grasp what speaking no lies means: It means being honest. What does ‘without blemish’ refer to? It means doing no evil. And what foundation is doing no evil built on? Without any doubt, it is built upon the foundation of fearing God. To be unblemished, therefore, means to fear God and shun evil. How does God define someone without blemish? In God’s eyes, only those who fear God and shun evil are perfect; thus, people who are unblemished are those who fear God and shun evil, and only those who are perfect are unblemished. This is **totally correct**” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). Thinking this over really scared me because God says: “**If you are not an honest person—then you will not be gained by God.**

Likewise, you will not gain the truth, and will also be incapable of gaining God,” and “If you cannot attain salvation, you will forever be a bitter enemy of God, and your outcome will be set.” It’s true that God doesn’t save deceitful people. I knew that if I didn’t repent, I’d end up cast out by God. Thanks to the exposure of God’s words, I finally got a real understanding of myself and knew that lies come from the devil. In the world controlled by Satan, one’s family upbringing and the influence of society make people more and more deceitful and evil. From a young age, my mom had always told me that no matter how awful someone’s hair or clothing might look, I still had to say nice things so I didn’t hurt their feelings. Otherwise, they would reject me when I needed help. With the influence of that sort of education, I didn’t have the courage to be honest. I only ever spoke fake words that sounded nice, so people would think I was kind and compassionate. But in fact, I ended up being a fake and deceitful person. It reminded me of Job 1:7 in the Bible: “And Jehovah said to Satan, **From where come you?** Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.” Satan’s words were cunning and indirect. By lying all the time, wasn’t I being cunning, just like Satan? I saw that I had the same kind of nature as Satan, that I was living under Satan’s power, and that I wasn’t free of the bonds of my satanic disposition at all. How could I be compatible with Christ or gain God’s approval that way? I came before God to repent, and asked Him to forgive me. I really hated myself and I felt so guilty. God’s disposition is righteous, and I knew I couldn’t keep lying and offending Him.

I continued to reflect and I read a passage of God’s word: “**In the end, those who are gained by God are marked with a sign. Do you know what it is? It is written in Revelation, in the Bible: ‘And in their mouth was found no lie; they are without blemish’** (Revelation 14:5). **Who are**

‘they’? They are those who are saved, perfected and gained by God”

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). I thought about God’s words and realized that God values those who are honest, and dishonest people won’t have a chance to enter His kingdom. I really wanted to become an honest person and stop lying and being deceitful, but I couldn’t do it on my own. I needed to seek God’s help to keep me from falling into Satan’s trap again. Even though telling the truth might be embarrassing sometimes, I wanted to stop telling lies. Then I reread “122. The Principles of Being an Honest Person” in 170 Principles of Practicing the Truth: “(1) In training oneself to be an honest person, it is necessary to rely on God. Give your heart over to Him, and accept His scrutiny. Only thus can one, over time, cast off their lies and deceit; (2) It is necessary to accept the truth and reflect on one’s every word and deed. Dissect the origin and essence of the corruption that is revealed in you, and come to really know yourself; (3) It is necessary to investigate in which matters one lies and harbors deceptiveness. Dare to dissect yourself and lay yourself bare, and apologize to others and make amends.” I decided that I had to open up to Susan about my corruption and my motivations. I couldn’t hide the facts and cheat her anymore. I had to tell the truth and be an honest person, no matter what. I knew that God was watching me and waiting for me to repent. After praying quite a few more times, I mustered up the courage to lay myself bare to Susan. I told her in detail all about how I’d deceived her and that I’d sincerely repented before God. I felt like a great weight had been lifted from me, and I was much more relaxed.

I knew that my lying was not a problem that could be fixed in one go, so after that I started coming before God in prayer all the time, asking Him to scrutinize my heart. When I revealed some sort of devious intention, or if I wanted to lie or be deceitful, I prayed to God, saying: “God, I’ve run into

a problem, and I feel like I can't get through it without lying. Please enlighten me to understand the truth, and give me the strength to forsake the flesh. Oh God, I want to practice the truth and be an honest person. Please help me."

One time after a gathering, a leader asked me what I'd thought of it. I'd actually noticed that he was being imperious in his fellowship, and that there were a few other problems. But I was afraid of injuring his pride with the truth, and that he would then have a poor view of me. To protect his image of me, I lied and said, "It was all great." I felt awful as soon as I said that. I realized I'd lied, so I prayed to God and asked Him to guide me to be an honest person and tell the truth. So then I went and talked to the leader about the problems with the gathering, and I felt much more at peace. The results of our next gatherings that we held were much better than before. I did notice that after some time, I was gradually changing. I'd always lied before to protect my face and status. But when I gave my heart to God, asking Him to watch over my heart, I saw my own state more clearly. I was able to consciously rely on God to forsake my flesh, practice the truth, and be an honest person. Even if sometimes I may be embarrassed or offend somebody, being an honest person before God is more important to me.

Now, I'm focused on speaking truthfully and being an honest person in my daily life. I'm really grateful to God. His words have helped me see my corruption and ugliness and undergo some changes. I know that resolving the problem of lying requires God to set up more situations for me to experience. I have to stay alert and reflect on myself more before God, so that I don't tell a lie that disgusts God. The most important thing is to accept the judgment and chastisement of God's words, and to pray to and rely on Him to truly be freed from a tendency to lie. May God guide me to be an honest person.

2. Faith: The Source of Strength

By Randy, Myanmar

Last summer I was looking into the work of Almighty God in the last days online. The brothers and sisters fellowshiped lots of truth with me, like how the Lord returns, how to listen for God's voice and welcome the Lord, how to tell the true Christ from false ones, the mysteries of God's 6,000-year management plan, and other aspects of the truth of vision. I also read lots of Almighty God's word. After two months of consideration, I saw that the word of Almighty God is the truth, that these words unlock the mysteries of the Bible, and I became certain that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned. I happily accepted Almighty God's work in the last days. I couldn't wait to tell my family the good news about the Lord's return to bring them all before God. But before I could share the gospel with them, I was notified that I had to return to the army.

I shared the gospel with my wife and mother later, over the phone. One day, I was talking with my wife about how to welcome the Lord, and she asked me, "Is this 'Eastern Lightning' that you believe in? The pastor says those people abandon their families. You should give up this faith." Hearing her say that made me feel upset and angry. I told her, "Don't be a fool. How can you just blindly believe what the pastor says? Is there any factual basis for him saying that? I've believed in Almighty God for over four months. Have I abandoned you? I don't care about family? I just know the CCP is madly arresting and persecuting believers, making it difficult for many brothers and sisters to return home, and even splitting lots of believers' families apart. How could the pastor twist the facts to say the brothers and sisters don't want their families? Those are all lies. You mustn't blindly listen to their rumors and lies." I went on, saying, "A reasonable person

should do some seeking on the topic of the Lord's coming and see if the words proclaimed by Almighty God are the voice of God. The Lord Jesus also said: **'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me'** (John 10:27). God's sheep hear His voice, so we should look into anything regarding the Lord's return and listen for His voice so that we may welcome Him. God's words are the truth—they're powerful and authoritative. They couldn't have come from any person. I've determined that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned because I've seen that all His words are the truth, that they're God's voice." But she wouldn't listen at all. All I could do was just end the call. I called her again a couple weeks later, but she just turned her phone off and wouldn't answer me. Then as soon as it was time for the evening gathering, she started calling me over and over. I couldn't settle down in the gathering or get any enlightenment from God's words because I was being disturbed. I didn't know what to do, so I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me through the situation. After praying, I thought that even though I didn't yet understand God's will in these matters, I had to have faith. I couldn't be constrained by these things, and had to focus on the gathering. I felt a little calmer after this. One day, to my surprise, my wife suddenly called me and said, "You bought a cellphone to listen to Eastern Lightning's preaching, but now our son is sick and we don't have money left for his treatment. You should think about our child." I clearly understood that she was only saying this because she didn't want me to believe in God. In reality, we could borrow the money if we needed it, and it's completely normal for children to get sick. He would have gotten sick whether I was a believer or not. I want the best for him too. How could my wife misunderstand me in that way? Seeing her use our child's illness as an excuse to keep me from my faith was really upsetting for me. Before I could say anything, she went on, "If you keep believing in this, we may not

even be a family in the future.” It was heart-wrenching to hear my wife say this. Would she really want a divorce while our child was still so small? I felt awful and just hung up without saying anything more. But what she’d said just kept bothering me and I couldn’t help but start complaining: Why hadn’t God protected our son’s health and our family harmony?

For a while, I couldn’t calm myself before God in gatherings and I didn’t have any enlightenment for fellowship on God’s word. So I prayed to God: “God, my stature is small. I’ve been feeling negative and weak since my wife said those things. Please stay with me and guide me to understand Your will.” That evening I read a passage of God’s words: **“While undergoing trials, it is normal for people to be weak, or to have negativity within them, or to lack clarity on God’s will or their path for practice. But in any case, you must have faith in God’s work, and not deny God, just like Job. Although Job was weak and cursed the day of his own birth, he did not deny that all things in human life were bestowed by Jehovah, and that Jehovah is also the One to take them all away. No matter how he was tested, he maintained this belief. In your experience, no matter what refinement you undergo through God’s words, what God requires of mankind, in brief, is their faith and their God-loving heart. What He perfects by working in this way is people’s faith, love, and aspirations. God does the work of perfection on people, and they cannot see it, cannot feel it; under such circumstances, your faith is required. People’s faith is required when something cannot be seen by the naked eye, and your faith is required when you cannot let go of your own notions. When you do not have clarity about God’s work, what is required of you is to have faith and to take a firm stance and stand witness. When Job reached this point, God appeared to him and spoke to him. That is, it is only from within your faith that you will**

be able to see God, and when you have faith God will perfect you. Without faith, He cannot do this” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). God’s words showed me that the path of faith and entry into His kingdom isn’t all smooth sailing. There are all sorts of hardships and trials, and lots of things we don’t like will happen. But we have to go through all this to reveal whether we have faith in God, and whether we can bear resounding witness for Him. Thinking back on when my wife was first opposing my faith in Almighty God, I had the faith to keep bearing witness to her. But when she started threatening divorce and our kid got sick, I couldn’t help but start complaining. I felt God was not protecting my family’s harmony, or keeping my child from illness. I saw I didn’t have true faith in God. A couple of things hadn’t turned out the way I had wanted and I started blaming God—how was that testimony? Then I started wondering: Why would I lose faith in God the moment something happened to my family? Why couldn’t I help but blame Him?

Later, I read a passage of God’s words that gave me some understanding of my views about pursuit in my faith. Almighty God says: **“Today, you do not believe the words I say, and you pay no attention to them; when the day comes for this work to spread and you see the entirety of it, you will regret, and at that time you will be dumbfounded. There are blessings, yet you do not know to enjoy them, and there is the truth, yet you do not pursue it. Do you not bring contempt upon yourself? Today, although the next step of God’s work has yet to begin, there is nothing exceptional about the demands that are made of you and what you are asked to live out. There is so much work, and so many truths; are they not worthy of being known by you? Is God’s chastisement and judgment incapable of awakening your**

spirit? Is God's chastisement and judgment incapable of making you hate yourself? Are you content to live under the influence of Satan, with peace and joy, and a little fleshly comfort? Are you not the lowliest of all people? None are more foolish than those who have beheld salvation but do not pursue to gain it; these are people who gorge themselves on the flesh and enjoy Satan. You hope that your faith in God will not entail any challenges or tribulations, or the slightest hardship. You always pursue those things that are worthless, and you attach no value to life, instead putting your own extravagant thoughts before the truth. You are so worthless! ... What you pursue is to be able to gain peace after believing in God, for your children to be free from illness, for your husband to have a good job, for your son to find a good wife, for your daughter to find a decent husband, for your oxen and horses to plow the land well, for a year of good weather for your crops. This is what you seek. Your pursuit is only to live in comfort, for no accidents to befall your family, for the winds to pass you by, for your face to be untouched by grit, for your family's crops to not be flooded, for you to be unaffected by any disaster, to live in God's embrace, to live in a cozy nest. A coward such as you, who always pursues the flesh—do you have a heart, do you have a spirit? Are you not a beast? I give you the true way without asking for anything in return, yet you do not pursue. Are you one of those who believe in God? I bestow real human life upon you, yet you do not pursue. Are you no different from a pig or a dog? Pigs do not pursue the life of man, they do not pursue being cleansed, and they do not understand what life is. Each day, after eating their fill, they simply sleep. I have given you the true way, yet you have not gained it: You are empty-handed. Are you willing to continue in this life, the life of a pig? What is the significance of such

people being alive? Your life is contemptible and ignoble, you live amid filth and licentiousness, and you do not pursue any goals; is your life not the most ignoble of all? Do you have the gall to look upon God? If you continue to experience in this way, will you not acquire nothing? The true way has been given to you, but whether or not you can ultimately gain it depends on your own personal pursuit” (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). From God’s words I saw that my goal and perspectives in faith were wrong, that they were not in pursuit of the truth, rather, they were for my family to be well and safe, and for our lives to be easy. I just wanted to live in God’s embrace and enjoy His grace. When I received His grace, I had the faith to follow Him, but when there were problems at home, and when my child was sick, I blamed God for the absence of His protection. I lost faith, and even felt wronged about what was happening to me, feeling like God should bless me for my faith, and keep me from encountering these kinds of things. Then I realized my faith was entirely built on receiving blessings and simply didn’t stand up to being tested. Having faith and worshiping God is right and natural. It’s like children being devoted to their parents—we shouldn’t be transactional with God. But I was always trying to get things out of God, to get His grace. I didn’t have any conscience or reason. Was I not exactly the sort of person God was talking about—without heart or spirit? How could that kind of faith be in line with His will? At that point, I saw that these undesirable things had happened with God’s permission. Going through all this was exposing my incorrect perspectives on faith, allowing me to reflect and know myself through God’s words, change my wrong ideas, and gain true faith in God. That was God’s purification and salvation for me. I gained faith once I understood God’s will. I didn’t want to keep pursuing familial peace, grace, and

blessings. I needed to keep attending gatherings. I resolved that no matter what happened in the future, I would always keep pursuing the truth.

I read another passage of God's words after that in my devotionals: **"What does this word, 'faith,' refer to? Faith is the genuine belief and the sincere heart that humans should possess when they cannot see or touch something, when God's work does not align with human notions, when it is beyond human reach. This is the faith that I speak of. People are in need of faith during times of hardship and refinement, and faith is something that is followed by refinement; refinement and faith cannot be separated. No matter how God works, and no matter your environment, you are able to pursue life and seek the truth, and seek knowledge of God's work, and have an understanding of His actions, and you are able to act according to the truth. Doing so is what it is to have true faith, and doing so shows that you have not lost faith in God. You can only have true faith in God if you are able to persist in pursuing the truth through refinement, if you are able to truly love God and do not develop doubts about Him, if no matter what He does you still practice the truth to satisfy Him, and if you are able to seek in the depths for His will and be considerate of His will"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). I learned from God's words that whether a situation is favorable or undesirable, we can't doubt or blame God. We have to seek God's will, stand on His side, and practice according to His words. We have to be able to follow God and practice the truth to satisfy Him, no matter how much we suffer. Only this is true faith. This understanding gave me a path of practice and the faith to follow God.

One day, I gave my mother a call and asked her if my wife was okay. She said, "She spends her days at her parents' house and doesn't take care

of things at home. She seems like a totally different person.” My mother also told me, “The pastor says you are on the wrong path, that your faith in Almighty God is a betrayal of the Lord Jesus. He told me to get you to go back to the church, and to give up Eastern Lightning.” I was so angry when I heard that and thought: “Why would the clergy say those words? It was because of their deceptive rumors that my wife opposed my faith in God. I can’t let them constrain me. I won’t listen to them, no matter what they say.” After thinking it through, I urged my mother, “Don’t listen to those things the clergy were saying. Almighty God has spoken so many truths, and His voice is the voice of God Himself. Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned. He and the Lord Jesus are the same God, so my faith in Almighty God isn’t a betrayal of the Lord Jesus. It’s following the Lamb’s footsteps and welcoming the arrival of the Lord.” She didn’t say anything in response after this.

Then one evening, I gave my wife a call. She said angrily, “Why are you calling me? I thought you didn’t want a family anymore. Make a choice. Eastern Lightning or our family? It’s fine if you don’t think of me, but you need to think of our child. He’s just eight months old.” Hearing my wife say this was really upsetting. I thought: “I’m just attending gatherings and reading God’s words. I am on the right path. I never said I don’t want our family or that I don’t care about her and our son. Why is she forcing me into this kind of choice?” Then it occurred to me, “She doesn’t know what faith in God is, and won’t listen no matter what I say. But having me give up my faith simply isn’t possible. I am already certain that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned, so I know I’ll keep following Almighty God no matter what she says.” When she saw I wasn’t responding, she just hung up. Though at the time, the things my wife said were disruptive for me, I knew that I couldn’t complain and blame God like before. I had to have faith, to

rely on God to get through this. Then I heard a hymn of God's words called **"You Should Forsake All for the Truth"**:

1 You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do. You must not throw away the truth for the sake of a peaceful family life, and you must not lose your life's dignity and integrity for the sake of momentary enjoyment.

2 You should pursue all that is beautiful and good, and you should pursue a path in life that is more meaningful. If you lead such a vulgar life, and do not pursue any objectives, do you not waste your life? What can you gain from such a life? You should forsake all enjoyments of the flesh for the sake of one truth, and should not throw away all truths for the sake of a little enjoyment. People like this have no integrity or dignity; there is no meaning to their existence!

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment

God's words bolstered my faith. I knew that as a believer, pursuing the truth is the only meaningful way to live and that I couldn't lose my faith over some troubles at home or carnal discomfort. Lacking faith and not worshiping God would be a life without meaning or value. I shouldn't be constrained by my family. My family and my child's health were all in God's hands, so I should entrust these things to God, and submit to His sovereignty and arrangements. I should pursue the truth, and do my duty as well as I could.

After a while, I had to go back home to get my ID card renewed because it was about to expire. I was very excited because I felt like this

was a good chance to share the gospel with my family. But I was also worried because my wife and mother were both against my faith in Almighty God, and everyone in my hometown knew that I believed in Almighty God. If the local clergy knew I was back, they'd definitely try to stand in my way. I had no idea what might happen once I went back. So I prayed out to God, saying, "Oh God! I want to share the gospel with my family on this trip home, but the clergy have been interfering and my family oppose me. I'm afraid they won't listen to my fellowship. God, please be with me and open up a path for me." Then I heard a hymn of God's words **"Follow God's Words and You Cannot Be Lost"**:

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2 With every person, matter, and thing you encounter, God's word will appear to you at any time, guiding you to act according to His will. Do all things in God's word, and God shall lead you forward in each of your acts; you shall never go astray, and you shall be able to live in a new light, with even more and newer enlightenments. You cannot use human notions to mull over what to do; you should submit to the guidance of God's word, have a clear heart, be quiet before God, and do more pondering. Do not fret for solutions to what you do not understand; bring such matters before God more often, and offer to Him a sincere heart.

3 Believe that God is your almighty. You must have a tremendous aspiration for God, ravenously seeking while refusing Satan's excuses, intentions, and tricks. Do not despair. Do not be weak. Seek with all your heart; wait with all your heart. Actively cooperate with God, and rid yourself of your internal hindrances.

—God's Fellowship

Listening to this hymn, I understood that God's will was within this trip back home. It was just that I had little faith in God and didn't understand His will. But I had to rely on God to get through. The part of God's words "**Believe that God is your almighty**" really stuck out for me. God's words bolstered my faith. Whatever I run into every day is what God allows. As long as I truly rely on and look to God, I believe He'll guide me to face all of it with His words.

When I first got home my wife just ignored me. I knew that was only because of the pastor's misleading influence on her. I had to find a chance to bear witness to her about God's work in the last days so she would know the truth and no longer be misled by the pastor. I prayed to God, asking for His guidance. Then I patiently shared some heartfelt words with her. I said, "You and mom really should look into Almighty God's work in the last days and listen to His words. Then you can be certain that this is God's voice, that it's God's words for mankind. If you don't investigate it and listen to God's own voice, but instead listen to the clergy's rumors and lies, how will you welcome the Lord? The Lord Jesus once said: '**Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you**' (Matthew 7:7). The Lord is trustworthy. As long as we truly seek, we will be able to hear the Lord's voice and welcome His return." My wife said nothing in response to this. I saw that she was just listening calmly and she didn't seem as resistant and argumentative as before. I thanked God from the heart, this was His guidance, and this gave me the confidence to keep telling them about God's work.

The next day, I gave testimony to God's appearance and work to both my wife and my mother. I said, "Do you know why I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days? Because I read Almighty God's words and saw it's all the truth, that it's the voice of God, and I became certain that He's

the returned Lord Jesus. In the last days, Almighty God has spoken millions of words, revealing to us all the mysteries of His 6,000-year management plan and of the Bible, as well as how mankind has developed up to the present day, how Satan has corrupted us, how God works step by step to save humanity, how He determines our outcomes and final destinations, what sort of person can be fully saved and enter the kingdom of heaven, and who will be punished. Almighty God has told us all of these mysteries and truth and more. Almighty God has also told us the truth of how man came to be corrupted by Satan and the root of our resistance to God. What's more, He's shown us the path to have our sins fully cleansed. Every single word is the truth, and it's all so powerful and authoritative. Almighty God has proclaimed all of this to purify and transform us, to completely save us from Satan's influence. Who do you think can express truths and reveal mysteries? Who can purify and save people? Only God can! People don't possess the truth. Only Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. You should thoroughly read Almighty God's words, then you'll see that Almighty God speaks the truth, that it's the voice of God, and that He is the Lord Jesus returned! If you hear someone relay that the Lord has returned and don't look into it, and just casually judge and condemn it because of what the pastor says, you'll ruin your chance at welcoming the Lord, and will lose the eternal salvation of God. That would be a terrible shame!" Hearing that, my mom said, "Yes, you're right. God created mankind, so we should listen to what God says, not other people." When I heard her say that, I gave thanks to God. Then she went on to tell me, "Once I asked the pastor to pray for something in our family, but he said, 'Your son doesn't listen to us. He didn't get our permission to follow Almighty God. You utterly disregard us, so don't ask us for any more help with your family affairs, handle these matters yourselves.'" Hearing this, I said angrily, "As clergy members, they

should lead the brothers and sisters to investigate any news of the Lord's return. Not only do they refuse to do that, but they threaten us, and keep us from hearing God's voice and from welcoming the Lord. What are their real motives? Aren't they just trying to keep everyone tightly in their own grasp? The Lord Jesus cursed the Pharisees: **'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in'** (Matthew 23:13). When the Lord Jesus appeared and worked, the Pharisees madly made up rumors, opposed and condemned Him so that they could keep hold of their status and livelihoods. They misled the believers and obstructed them from following the Lord, and eventually ended up having the Lord Jesus crucified, after which they were cursed and punished by God. Today's clergy are just like the Pharisees. They fear the believers will believe in Almighty God and that they will lose their status and livelihoods, so they do their utmost to keep believers from hearing the word of the Lord and welcoming Him. They're acting as enemies of God! They'll ultimately be cursed and punished, too."

Then I gave them fellowship about how we have to listen for the Lord's voice to welcome Him, and that that's the only way to be a wise virgin and greet the Lord. Then I urged them, "I truly hope you thoroughly look into and listen to the words of Almighty God, to see if they really are the voice of God. I'd hate to see you misled and controlled by the clergy. You need to learn to have discernment." My mother then said, "You're right. Before I'd always only listened to our clergy, afraid you were taking the wrong path. That's why I tried to keep you from believing in Almighty God. But I see your fellowship is biblically sound, and things really aren't the way the clergy portrayed them. I'll look into it." My wife had been listening intently throughout this. After that, I read lots of Almighty God's

words to them, then fellowshiped on things like the difference between following God and following man, why God is doing His judgment work of the last days in the flesh now, and the significance of God's judgment work in the last days. After a few sessions of fellowship, both of them accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. I thanked God when I saw both of them come before Him.

One time, my wife opened up to me. She said, "I was oppressive toward you before, and even pushed you toward divorce, all because I listened to the pastor. Every time I went to church, he'd tell me you were on the wrong path and told me to urge you to turn back. I thought what he was saying was true, so I was constantly arguing with you and I wouldn't listen to you at all. But over this time of reading Almighty God's words and hearing your fellowship, I've seen it's totally different from what the pastor had told me. Thinking back on my attitude toward God's new work really scares me. I was fighting against God, and nearly lost my chance to welcome the Lord's coming. I shouldn't have believed what the pastor was telling me and I shouldn't have oppressed you. I'm truly sorry." When I heard my wife say that, I was so moved. I nearly started crying and thanked Almighty God from the bottom of my heart!

Through undergoing all that, I experienced God's heartfelt efforts to save mankind. He allowed difficult things to happen to me to expose my corruption and shortcomings, and to perfect my faith in Him. Though sometimes I suffered and felt weak, and felt tormented, God never left my side, and always guided me with His words. This helped me understand my mistaken views about faith, see through the schemes and disruptions of Satan, and learn some truths. This strengthened my faith in God. It was all God's guidance! Thank God!

3. God's Words Eliminated My Misunderstandings

By Flavien, Benin

In September 2019, I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. Later, I was selected as group leader of gatherings in the church, and the brothers and sisters said I understood things quickly and had good caliber. Not long after that, I was selected as gospel deacon, and I performed my duties more actively than before. Every day I was busy preaching the gospel and hosting gatherings. My brothers and sisters enjoyed my fellowship, and the church leader said I did a good job. This made me very happy, and I felt my caliber truly was particularly good. To gain more people's admiration, I read more of God's word, and watched many films from God's house and video readings of God's word. But I was merely content with understanding words and doctrines, so as to show myself off, and I wasn't focused on understanding God's will or practicing the truth. At gatherings, I fellowshiped as comprehensively as I could so others would think I understood more. I even fellowshiped on things I didn't understand well to make others think I knew everything. To create a good image in my leader's heart, I pretended to be very strong. For example, at first, I had notions about God's work, but I thought that if I spoke out, my leader would think I didn't understand the truth. So I deliberately hid my notions from my leader. It was as if I was wearing a mask. What appeared in front of others was an illusion.

A few months later, I was selected as a church leader, principally in charge of gospel work. This work required caliber, discernment, and work ability. I felt that no one in the church but me had those qualifications, so I had been ordained by God to perform this duty. Being promoted repeatedly

made me feel I was different from others, the most avid in seeking the truth, someone loved and favored by God. I also felt like I was a special person in the church, and that I was indispensable to it. I even thought being responsible for gospel work was like being a guard at the entrance to the church, that I could decide who could enter and who couldn't. Slowly, I became more and more arrogant, and I felt that I was above the others, that I could issue orders, and that my brothers and sisters were my "enforcers" who had to listen to me. In church work, I always wanted to decide by myself and have the final say. I felt like it was I who had the ability to work, I who had mastered the principles, so I didn't need to accept the views or advice of others. I always looked down on my brothers and sisters. There was a group leader of average caliber who I turned my nose up at. Without regard to whether she was effective in her duty, I wanted to arbitrarily replace her. On top of that, I regarded my brothers and sisters as my subordinates, and felt like I could criticize them however I liked. One sister had her own method of practice in her duties, but I didn't think she was doing it right, so without fellowshiping on principles, I severely criticized her. This made her so negative that she didn't want to partner with me. Later, during a gathering, our leader asked everyone if there were any difficulties, and this sister said directly: "Brother Flavien has a problem. He doesn't fellowship on the truth, he is always criticizing people, and every time he criticizes me it is always very harsh." Following that, several more brothers and sisters reported that I criticized people arbitrarily, and exposed my arrogant behavior using God's words.

Actually, some people had already mentioned the problem of my arrogant behavior to me. Some brothers and sisters saw me being overly strict when I asked about others' work and sent me messages to say, "Brother, it wasn't good to speak that way. You'll make your brothers and

sisters feel negative.” My brothers and sisters had also mentioned that I spoke down to others, that I didn’t put myself on an equal footing with my brothers and sisters, that some of them didn’t want to talk to me, and that others felt so attacked that they didn’t want their duty anymore. After being repeatedly rebuked and dealt with by my brothers and sisters, my sense of pride was dealt a blow. I used to think I was someone God loved and favored, but seeing how my brothers and sisters exposed and rejected me made me feel highly dejected and negative. I lost the drive to pursue, and in my duties I just went through the motions, didn’t follow up on my brothers’ and sisters’ work, and didn’t focus on resolving the difficulties or problems they faced. I didn’t care at all about what they needed most.

Later, a sister sent me a passage of God’s word. It was highly relevant to my state. God says: **“Since mankind’s corruption by Satan, people’s nature has begun to deteriorate, and they have gradually lost the sense possessed by normal people. They now no longer act as human beings in the position of man, but are filled with wild aspirations; they have surpassed the station of man—yet yearn, still, to go even higher. What does this ‘higher’ refer to? They wish to surpass God, to surpass the heavens, and to surpass all else. What is at the root of why people betray such dispositions? When all is said and done, man’s nature is overly arrogant. Most people understand the meaning of the word ‘arrogance.’ It is a pejorative term. If someone displays arrogance, others think they aren’t a good person. Whenever someone is incredibly arrogant, others always assume they are an evildoer. No one wants to have this term pinned to them. In fact, however, everyone is arrogant, and all corrupt humans have this essence. Some people say, ‘I’m not the least bit arrogant. I’ve never wanted to be the archangel, nor have I ever wanted to surpass God, or to surpass all else. I’ve**

always been someone who's especially well-behaved and dutiful.' Not necessarily; these words are incorrect. Once people have grown arrogant in nature and essence, they can often disobey and resist God, not heed His words, generate notions about Him, do things that betray Him, and things that exalt and bear testimony to themselves. You say you are not arrogant, but suppose you were given a church and allowed to lead it; suppose that I did not deal with you, and that no one in God's family criticized or helped you: After leading it a while, you would bring people to your feet and make them submit before you, even to the point of admiring and revering you. And why would you do that? This would be determined by your nature; it would be none other than a natural revelation. You do not have any need to learn this from others, nor is there any need for them to teach it to you. You do not need others to instruct you or compel you to do this; this kind of situation comes about naturally. Everything you do is about making people exalt you, praise you, worship you, submit to you, and listen to you in all things. Allowing you to be a leader naturally brings about this situation, and it cannot be changed. And how does this situation come about? It is determined by man's arrogant nature. The manifestation of arrogance is rebellion and resistance against God. When people are arrogant, self-important, and self-righteous, they tend to set up their own independent kingdoms and do things in whatever way they want. They also bring others into their own hands and draw them into their embraces. For people to be capable of doing such arrogant things, it just proves that the essence of their arrogant nature is that of Satan; it is that of the archangel. When their arrogance and self-importance reach a certain level, they no longer have a place for God in their hearts, and God is put aside. They then wish to be God,

make people obey them, and they become the archangel. If you possess such a satanic arrogant nature, God will have no place in your heart. Even if you believe in God, God will no longer recognize you, will view you as an evildoer, and will cast you out” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. An Arrogant Nature Is at the Root of Man’s Resistance to God). After reading God’s words, I thought of my behavior up to this point. When I had started believing, everyone had admired and encouraged me. They said I had good caliber and that I fellowshiped well. I was promoted several times too, so I felt I was special and better than the other brothers and sisters, and that I was qualified to be in charge of them. My arrogant and self-righteous nature and my ambition for pursuing status made me think I was someone who God took joy in and favored. I felt like I was outstanding and superior to others, so I started to use my position to scold and constrain others. I even tried to control my brothers and sisters and make them listen to me. I had been behaving just like the archangel! I thought too highly of myself. After being dealt with and rejected by my brothers and sisters, I realized I wasn’t as perfect as I imagined. I had assumed that I was so high above others and that God favored me, but those were purely my imagination.

Several days later, I read two passages of God’s word that exposed and dissected antichrists. God says: **“Antichrists will pay any price for the sake of their status and the satisfaction of their ambition, for their goal of controlling the church and being God. They often work late into the night and wake at the crack of dawn, rehearsing their sermons in the wee hours, and they also note down the brilliant things others have said, all in order to equip themselves with the doctrine they need to give lofty sermons. Every day, they ponder which of God’s words to use in preaching their lofty sermons, which words will inspire admiration and praise among the chosen ones, and then they learn those words by**

heart. Then, they consider how to interpret those words in a way that demonstrates their brilliance and insight. In order to really impress God's word upon their hearts, they strive to listen to His word several times more. They do all this with all the labor of students vying for a spot in college. When someone gives a good sermon, or one that provides some illumination, or one that provides some theory, an antichrist will collect and compile it and make it into their own sermon. No amount of labor is too great for an antichrist. What, then, is the motive and intention behind this labor of theirs? It is to be able to preach God's words, to say them clearly and with ease, to have fluent command of them, so that others may see the antichrist is more spiritual than they, more treasuring of God's words, more loving of God. In this way, an antichrist can gain the admiration and worship of some of the people around them. An antichrist feels this is a worthwhile thing to do and worth any effort, price, or hardship" (The Word, Vol. 4.

Exposing Antichrists. Item Ten: They Despise the Truth, Publicly Flout Principles, and Ignore the Arrangements of God's House (Part Seven)). **"The essence of the behavior of antichrists is to constantly use various means and methods to satisfy their ambitions and desires, to mislead and ensnare people, and to gain high status so that people will follow and worship them. It is possible that in the depths of their hearts they are not deliberately vying over humanity with God, but one thing is certain: Even when they do not vie with God for humans, they still wish to have status and power among them. Even if the day comes when they realize that they are vying with God for status, and they rein themselves in a bit, they still employ different methods to pursue status and reputation; it is clear to them in their hearts that they will secure legitimate status, by winning the approval and admiration of some people. In short, though everything**

antichrists do appears to comprise a performance of their duties, its consequence is to mislead people, to make them worship and follow them—in which case, performing their duty in this way is exalting and testifying to themselves. Their ambition to control people and to gain status and power in the church will never change. They are out-and-out antichrists” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Five: They Mislead, Draw In, Threaten, and Control People). God says that antichrists, in order to receive the praise and worship of others, use outward suffering to create an illusion to deceive people. Wasn't this what I was? I had always sought fame and status, and everything I did was to make others look up to me. I spent so much time reading God's word, sometimes not sleeping until late at night, but my purpose was merely to understand more doctrines so as to better show myself off and have others look up to me and appreciate me. God's words revealed all the manifestations that I had. I felt I had already been condemned by God, that I would be cast out, and I was filled with anxiety. But I didn't dare tell my brothers and sisters my real state, because I feared being seen as an antichrist and being expelled. I strove to conceal my anxiety in front of the others, but my heart was in agony, and I felt like I had been sentenced to death. During that same period, an antichrist had been exposed and expelled. Outwardly, she appeared to expend for God and seek God's word to fellowship with other brothers and sisters, but she herself didn't practice the word of God, and when something happened that was not in line with her notions she spread negativity, and even denied God's work in the last days and disturbed those investigating the true way. I realized some of my own manifestations were the same as hers. For example, I often found God's word to fellowship with my brothers and sisters, but I myself didn't practice God's word. When I had difficulties, I relied on my own intelligence and wisdom to solve them, rather than

focusing on seeking God's will or practicing the truth. Furthermore, I also had the manifestations of an antichrist that God's words had revealed. I was even more afraid I would become an antichrist and be expelled, because I felt I had a bad nature, that I could easily deceive and control my brothers and sisters, and that one day, like that antichrist, I would disrupt the work of the church. Thinking about this exacerbated my fear. I felt I had no hope of being blessed, so I began to have complaints, "I disregarded my family's objections to believe in God and perform my duty. I even forsook my future and left my hometown to spread the gospel in new places. I've paid such a high price, but in the end I'm still going to hell to be punished. If I knew it would end like this, I wouldn't have expended so much. I would have at least enjoyed some fleshly happiness before death." At that time, I only thought about my destination, and didn't pay attention to seeking God's will, so I was always guarded against God and misunderstanding Him. I felt that if I continued to do such an important duty, I would definitely be exposed and expelled, so I resigned from my leadership position. I feared my brothers and sisters would criticize and deal with me after seeing my true face, so I didn't open my heart to them, nor did I partner with them. My relationship with my brothers and sisters became entirely distant. Later, I used the excuse of going home to preach the gospel to return to my unbeliever family. Faced with the coercion and obstruction of my family, I became even more negative. Although I still attended gatherings, I was only going through the motions. I was very weak, and I felt I had come to the end, so I decided to leave the church.

After I left the church, my heart was very empty. I stayed in my room all day long and didn't want to do anything. Although my family no longer persecuted me and I was quite comfortable physically, I was filled with anxiety, and felt very guilty. I was constantly worried that I would be

punished by God for betraying Him. I was afraid of hell and afraid of death—I tried to overcome this anxiety, but to no avail. I read a lot of social science books, hoping to find something in them to comfort my soul, but nothing could relieve my inner torment. It seemed I could only passively wait for death. One day, I prayed to God to ask Him to guide me out of my predicament. Later, I began listening to hymns and reading God’s words. His words stirred my conscience and enlightened me. God says: **“Some people have the disposition of an antichrist, and often display the outpourings of certain corrupt dispositions, but at the same time as having such outpourings, they also reflect upon and know themselves, and are able to accept and practice the truth, and after a time, change can be seen in them. They are possible objects of salvation”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Four: They Exalt and Testify About Themselves). **“There are those who, when reading God’s words, often develop notions and misunderstandings because God reveals people’s corrupt states and says some things condemning people. They become negative and weak, thinking that God’s words were directed at them, that God is giving up on them and won’t save them. They become negative to the point of tears and don’t want to follow God anymore. This is actually a misunderstanding of God. When you do not understand the meaning of God’s words, you should not try to delineate God. You don’t know what kind of person God abandons, or under what circumstances He gives up on people, or under what circumstances He puts people aside; there are principles and contexts to all of this. If you don’t have full insight into these detailed matters, you’ll be very prone to hypersensitivity and you’ll delimit yourself based on one word from God. Isn’t that problematic? When God judges people, what is the chief aspect of them that He condemns? What God judges and reveals**

are people's corrupt dispositions and corrupt essences, He condemns their satanic dispositions and satanic natures, He condemns the various manifestations and behaviors of their rebellion and opposition to God, He condemns them for being unable to obey God, for always opposing God, and for always having their own motivations and aims—but such condemnation does not mean that God has abandoned people with satanic dispositions. If this is not clear to you, then you lack comprehension ability, which makes you a bit like people who are mentally ill, always suspicious of everything and misinterpreting God. Such people are devoid of true faith, so how could they follow God to the very end? Hearing a single statement of condemnation from God, you think that, having been condemned by God, people have been abandoned by God, and will no longer be saved, and because of this you become negative, and abandon yourself to despair. This is misinterpreting God. In fact, God has not abandoned people. They have misinterpreted God and abandoned themselves. Nothing is more critical than when people abandon themselves, as fulfilled in the words of the Old Testament: 'Fools die for want of wisdom' (Proverbs 10:21). No behavior is more stupid than when people abandon themselves to despair. Sometimes you read God's words that seem to delineate people; in fact, they are not delineating anyone, but are the expression of God's will and opinion. These are words of truth and principle, they are not delineating anyone. The words uttered by God during times of anger or rage also represent God's disposition, these words are the truth, and, moreover, belong to principle. People must understand this. God's purpose in saying this is to allow people to understand the truth, and to understand the principles; it is absolutely not to delimit anyone. This has nothing to do with people's ultimate destination and reward,

much less are they people's ultimate punishment. These are merely words spoken to judge and deal with people, they are the result of anger at people not living up to His expectations, and they are spoken in order to wake people up, to prompt them, and they are words from God's heart. And yet, some people fall down and forsake God because of a single statement of judgment from God. People like this don't know what's good for them, they are impervious to reason, they do not accept the truth at all. ... There are times when God shuns people, and times when He places them to one side for a time so that they may reflect upon themselves, but God has not forsaken them; He is giving them the opportunity to repent. God only truly forsakes the wicked who commit many evil acts, nonbelievers, and antichrists. Some people say, 'I feel devoid of the work of the Holy Spirit and long have I been without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Has God forsaken me?' This is a misconception. There is also a problem of disposition here: People are overemotional, they always follow their own reasoning, are always willful, and are devoid of rationality—isn't this a problem of disposition? You say that God has forsaken you, that He will not save you, so has He set your end? God has merely said a few angry words to you. How could you say that He's given up on you, that He doesn't want you anymore? There are occasions when you cannot feel the work of the Holy Spirit, but God has not deprived you of the right to read His words, nor has He determined your end, or cut off your path to salvation—so what are you so upset about? You are in a bad state, there is a problem with your motives, there are issues with your thought and viewpoint, your state of mind is twisted—and yet you do not try to fix these things by seeking the truth, instead constantly misinterpreting and blaming God, and pushing the responsibility onto

God, and even saying, ‘God doesn’t want me, so I don’t believe in Him anymore.’ Are you not being irrational? Are you not being unreasonable?” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by

Resolving One’s Notions Can One Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God (1)). God’s words spoke to my heart. I understood that God had not given up on me, condemned me, or determined my outcome. In fact, God knew how corrupted by Satan I was. God allowed my brothers and sisters to expose me at the right time and used His words to reveal my corrupt disposition and the wrong path I had taken, because only in this way could I have knowledge of myself. This was a great chance for me to change. God’s judgment, chastisement, pruning, and dealing were not to condemn me or cast me out, but to save me. God hoped that I could truly know myself, and have true repentance. But I used my individual prejudices and notions to misunderstand God’s will, believing that because I had the manifestations of an antichrist, God definitely didn’t want me, and that I was doomed to the same fate of those to be destroyed. I believed that if someone with an antichrist’s disposition like myself remained in the church they would sooner or later disrupt the church’s work. But actually, all of my manifestations were normal in the eyes of God. I had revealed the manifestations of an antichrist’s disposition, but I hadn’t yet become an antichrist. God casts out and punishes those who have the essence of an antichrist. They are unable to repent, because their nature essence is evil, and they loathe and detest the truth. No matter what they do wrong, they never admit their errors, and they do anything it takes to maintain their prestige and status, right to their death. I could still realize that I was corrupted so deeply, and I knew my error, so I still had the opportunity to repent. I only had an antichrist’s disposition, I wasn’t an antichrist with no ability to accept even the slightest bit of truth or who despised the truth.

God had not condemned me on the basis of my exposed corruption, but had tried to save me to the greatest extent possible, waiting for me to repent. But I had been living with notions against God and I had misunderstood Him, believing God would cast me out. So I resigned and left the church, worried that if I remained in the church I would continue to disrupt its work and that I would suffer an even greater punishment. I didn't understand God's will, and I didn't know God's love or God's disposition. I thought that since God didn't want me anymore, any efforts I made were in vain. If I didn't enjoy fleshly pleasures in this world, I would have nothing. Looking back now on what I did, I feel terribly ashamed. I swore many times that I would follow God all my life, but as soon as I faced judgment and exposure, I became passive, denied God's salvation, lost faith in God, and chose without hesitation my personal interests, and to return to the world and enjoy fleshly pleasure. Where was my conscience! I felt the deepest regret. Now that I understood God's will, it seemed like I had hope for life again, and I felt like I had risen from the dead. I let go of all my personal plans, including study and work, and began to conscientiously ponder God's word, sing hymns, listen to recitations of God's word, and seek God's will in His words. It was like starting all over on the path of belief in God. Little by little, I once again received God's mercy and felt the joy of God's presence. I found inner peace and joy, and I also felt a renewed desire to return to the church in my heart. However, I didn't know if the church would accept me. So I prayed to God, asking Him to have mercy on me and save me.

A few weeks later, I read a passage of God's word and understood a little more of His will. God says: **"Several years after this stage of work began, there was a man who believed in God but did not pursue the truth; all he wanted was to earn money and find a partner, to lead the**

life of the rich, and so he left the church. After roaming around for a few years, he returned unexpectedly. He felt great remorse in his heart, and wept untold tears. This proved that his heart did not leave God completely, which is a good thing; he still had a chance and a hope of being saved. Had he stopped believing, becoming the same as unbelievers, then he would have been completely done for. If he can truly repent, then there is hope for him yet; this is rare and precious. Regardless of how God acts, and no matter how He treats people—even if He hates, detests, or curses them—if there comes a day when they can make a turnaround, then I will take great comfort, for this will mean that they still have that little bit of room for God in their hearts, that they have not completely lost their human reason or their humanity, that they still want to believe in God, and they have at least some intention to acknowledge and return before Him. For people who truly have God in their hearts, no matter when they left God's house, if they return and still hold this family dear, then I will become somewhat sentimentally attached and will take some comfort in it. However, if they never return, I will think it a pity. If they can return and truly repent, then My heart will especially be filled with gratification and comfort. That this man was still capable of returning implies that he had not forgotten God; he returned because in his heart, he still longed for God. It was very touching when we met. When he walked away, he certainly was being quite negative, and he was in a bad state; if he can come back now, though, it proves he still has faith in God. However, whether or not he can continue forward is an unknown factor, because people change so quickly. In the Age of Grace, Jesus had pity and grace for humans. If one sheep was lost out of a hundred, He would leave the ninety-nine to look for the one. This line does not represent a kind of

mechanical action, nor a rule; rather, it shows God's urgent intention to bring salvation to people, as well as His deep love for them. It is not a way of doing things; it is a kind of disposition, a sort of mentality. Thus, some people leave the church for six months or a year, or have however many weaknesses or suffer from however many misconceptions, and yet their ability to later wake up to reality, gain knowledge and make a turnaround, and get back on the right track makes Me feel especially comforted and brings Me a little piece of enjoyment. In this world of gaiety and splendor, and in this evil age, being able to acknowledge God and get back on the right track is something that brings quite a bit of comfort and excitement. Take raising children, for example: Whether or not they are filial, how would you feel if they did not acknowledge you, and left home, never to return? Deep down, you would still keep on feeling concerned about them, and you would always wonder, 'When will my son return? I'd like to see him. After all, he is my son, and it wasn't for nothing that I raised him and loved him.' You have always thought this way; you have always longed for that day to come. Everyone feels the same in this regard, to say nothing of God—is His not an even greater hope that man will find their way back after having gone astray, that the prodigal son will return? People these days are small of stature, but the day will come when they understand God's will—unless they have no inclination toward true faith, unless they are nonbelievers, in which case they are beneath God's concern” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words moved me, and tears streamed down my face. I felt like God was talking to me face to face, just like a mother speaks to her child. God saved me when I was most desperate, and made me realize how real His love is. I understood that God doesn't easily condemn or strike people down. God came incarnate in the

last days to save humankind. God had never really left me, as I had assumed. Instead, due to my corrupt disposition and the wrong path I had taken, He had hidden His face from me. This was God's righteousness and holiness, in order to discipline me and to change me. God was waiting for me to repent, but I had many notions and misunderstandings about God. I always stood on a personal standpoint and substituted my own notions for God's will, as if I understood the truth. Although I was so rebellious, God knew my weakness, and knew where I would fall and fail. God's love was greater than I could ever imagine. Step by step, God guided me until I woke up. I realized that God's intention to save people is sincere. As long as people keep His name and His way, God will always extend the hand of salvation. God is responsible for everyone's life, but people must actively fulfill the responsibilities of a created being. God does not like those who are cowardly like me, He likes those with resolution. So long as I sincerely repented, and strove to seek the truth and change myself, it wasn't yet too late. I still had a chance to change my corrupt disposition and to be saved. Once I understood God's will, my state of negativity and misunderstanding was reversed.

Later, I read another passage of God's word that gave me some understanding of God's work of judgment. God says: **"Today God judges you, chastises you, and condemns you, but you must know that the point of your condemnation is for you to know yourself. He condemns, curses, judges, and chastises so that you might know yourself, so that your disposition might change, and, moreover, so that you might know your worth, and see that all of God's actions are righteous and in accordance with His disposition and the requirements of His work, that He works in accordance with His plan for man's salvation, and that He is the righteous God who loves, saves, judges, and chastises man. If you**

only know that you are of lowly status, that you are corrupt and disobedient, but do not know that God wishes to make plain His salvation through the judgment and chastisement that He does in you today, then you have no way of gaining experience, much less are you capable of continuing forward. God has not come to kill or destroy, but to judge, curse, chastise, and save. Until His 6,000-year management plan comes to a close—before He reveals the outcome of each category of man—God’s work on earth will be for the sake of salvation; its purpose is purely to make those who love Him complete—thoroughly so—and to bring them into submission under His dominion. No matter how God saves people, it is all done by making them break away from their old satanic nature; that is, He saves them by having them seek life. If they do not do so, then they will have no way to accept God’s salvation. Salvation is the work of God Himself, and the seeking for life is something that man must take on in order to accept salvation. In the eyes of man, salvation is the love of God, and the love of God cannot be chastisement, judgment, and curses; salvation must contain love, compassion, and, moreover, words of solace, as well as boundless blessings bestowed by God. People believe that when God saves man, He does so by moving them with His blessings and grace, so that they can give their hearts to God. That is to say, His touching man is His saving them. This sort of salvation is done by striking a deal. Only when God grants them a hundredfold will man come to submit before God’s name and strive to do well for Him and bring Him glory. This is not what God intends for mankind. God has come to work on earth in order to save corrupt mankind; there is no falsehood in this. If there were, He would certainly not have come to do His work in person. In the past, His means of salvation involved showing the utmost love and

compassion, such that He gave His all to Satan in exchange for the whole of mankind. The present is nothing like the past: The salvation bestowed upon you today occurs at the time of the last days, during the classification of each according to kind; the means of your salvation is not love or compassion, but chastisement and judgment, in order that man may be more thoroughly saved. Thus, all that you receive is chastisement, judgment, and merciless smiting, but know this: In this heartless smiting there is not the slightest punishment. Regardless of how harsh My words might be, what befall you are but a few words that might appear utterly heartless to you, and no matter how angry I might be, what rain upon you are still words of teaching, and I do not mean to harm you or put you to death. Is this not all fact? Know that nowadays, whether it be righteous judgment or heartless refinement and chastisement, everything is for the sake of salvation. Regardless of whether today each is classified according to kind or the categories of man are laid bare, the purpose of all of God's words and work is to save those who truly love God. Righteous judgment is brought to purify man, and heartless refinement is done to cleanse them; harsh words or chastening are both done to purify and are for the sake of salvation"

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Put Aside the Blessings of Status and Understand God's Will to Bring Salvation to Man). After reading God's words, I saw that I didn't understand God's work of judgment. When I first accepted God's work, it was more to enjoy God's love and His mercy, and the illumination and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. I was content to merely enjoy God's grace. I thought I was a little baby in God's hands, someone cherished by God, that I was special and perfect, and that I shouldn't be severely judged like this by God. Therefore, when God's severe words exposed my corruption and my antichrist's disposition, I thought God was

going to cast me out. In fact, I didn't understand God's will. Humans were too deeply corrupted by Satan, and only God's severe judgment and chastisement could change people's corrupt dispositions and fully save us from the power of Satan. I had been corrupted so deeply by Satan, I was so arrogant and self-righteous, that I needed the judgment and chastisement of God's words to wake me up. Only this kind of work could make me see the ugly appearance of my corruption by Satan, and only then could I come to hate myself and forsake Satan. Without it, I would still think I was perfect and loved by God, and then I would never turn around to seek the truth or reflect on myself. I would have continued on the wrong path of antichrists until I died. I believed in God, yet didn't want to suffer at all, and wanted to be spoiled by God, to enjoy God's grace and mercy forever like a baby. How could I ever be purified by God like this? My ignorance and selfishness made me misunderstand God, turn away from Him, and betray Him. I could not see that behind His work of judgment was His love and salvation. I had paid a heavy price for my ignorance and selfishness. After realizing the great significance of God's work of judgment and chastisement, I once again had the confidence to follow God and experience God's work. I understood, regardless of whether God's work conformed to my notions, it was all done to purify me and change my corrupt disposition, and to fully save me from Satan's power. God's judgment and chastisement is His best way to save man.

After that, I read more of God's words and understood God's requirements. God wanted me to be a true created being, accept His sovereignty and provision, fulfill my own duty, come to know Him and testify to Him. Actually, I had the same status as my brothers and sisters. God had given me some gifts and talents or a chance to serve as a leader, but this did not mean my status was higher than that of my brothers and

sisters. I was still a created being, and was still a corrupt person in need of God's salvation. These gifts and talents were given by God, so I should not have been parading myself. I should have focused my effort on performing my duty well to satisfy God. Once I realized these things, I had a path of practice, and I felt a sense of relief. Now, I wanted to hurry back to the church to continue my duties. This time, my determination to follow God and perform my duty was firmer. I deleted everything on my computer and phone unrelated to belief in God, wanting to put all else aside and follow Him. A few days later, I went back to the church and continued to preach the gospel. I was so grateful to God. In my duties, I consciously cooperated with my brothers and sisters. Each time I encountered a problem, I asked my brothers and sisters for their views and suggestions, and asked them to participate. I no longer had to have the final say and I no longer imposed my views on my brothers and sisters. Instead, I talked things over and discussed things with everybody. I no longer wanted to show off to make them look up to me, nor did I try to control them. I didn't want power anymore. Instead, I learned to seek the truth principles together with my brothers and sisters. Practicing like this felt much more at ease, which was something I hadn't felt before.

Since this experience, I have gained some understanding of my corrupt dispositions. I have also gained some insights into God's work and His will to save mankind, as well as greater faith. I truly feel that God's judgment and chastisement is not a matter of condemnation and destruction, but rather is His love and salvation. Just as God's word says: **“God's chastisement and judgment is the light, and the light of man's salvation, and there is no better blessing, grace or protection for man”**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). Thanks be to God!

4. A Church Leader Isn't an Officer

By Matthew, France

I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days three years ago. I was elected as church leader in October 2020. I realized it was a big responsibility and I felt a little stressed, but I was also really proud. I felt I was elected for that important duty because I had better caliber than the others. I took my duty really seriously, doing my best to fellowship with my brothers and sisters and helping them with problems and difficulties they ran into. I wanted to prove to everyone that I was an excellent leader and could do real work.

Then an evildoer started spreading rumors in the church. He was spreading the Chinese Communist Party's lies slandering and blaspheming God in gathering groups, twisting facts and turning things inside out, and judging the work of God's house. He wanted to mislead newcomers into leaving the church and betraying God. So, I was holding gatherings and fellowshipping with the brothers and sisters as much as I could, and I felt like a military commander, leading the troops against enemy factions. I wanted to prove I could protect the brothers and sisters, to show them I could take on a heavy burden, that I was responsible. But in reality, I felt really weak. I myself didn't know how to refute some fallacies and they were even disturbing me, too. But I didn't want to reveal my weakness to the others. I thought that as a church leader, I had to be tough, like a president or military commander. I couldn't let anyone see my weakness! So I never opened up to the brothers and sisters about my own state. Not only did I disguise myself in this matter, when discussing our understandings of God's words in gatherings, I liked talking about profound understandings so others would think I comprehended them really well. But I just glossed over my

own failures and corruptions, quickly changing the subject to the things that I did right. For example, if I got sleepy in a gathering I wouldn't admit it, and I'd hide it when I did have a difficulty instead of sharing it with the others.

Sister Marinette, who worked with me, really admired me because I was always helping her with words of God relevant to her state. I knew she kind of looked up to me, and I was really pleased and content when she expressed her admiration. The brothers and sisters who were waterers for newcomers also admired me a lot. Once a sister told me that she'd learned from my fellowship and help. I was really pleased to gain others' approval. In gatherings, some brothers and sisters actively responded with "Amen" after my fellowship, and some even said, "It's just like Brother Matthew said." It seemed to me that they spoke to me with a tone of adoration, and I felt like I held an important place in their hearts. I knew that wasn't appropriate, but I liked the feeling of being looked up to. Then one day, I saw a testimony video called *The Harm Done by Showing Off*. It struck a particular chord with me. A sister, also a leader, was always elevating herself and showing off in her duty. She offended God's disposition and was disciplined with an illness. The crux of the matter was that her behavior disgusted God. After I saw that video, I realized that in my boasting and showing off to gain others' admiration, I was defying and opposing God. I was on the path of an antichrist. I'd never realized that elevating oneself and showing off could be such a serious problem. I felt really scared and didn't know what to do.

Then I read this passage of God's words that gave me some insight into my corruption. God's words say: **"Exalting and testifying to themselves, flaunting themselves, trying to make people think highly of them and worship them—corrupt mankind is capable of these things.**

This is how people instinctively react when they are governed by their satanic natures, and it is common to all of corrupt mankind. How do people usually exalt and testify to themselves? How do they achieve this aim of making people think highly of them and worship them? They testify to how much work they have done, how much they have suffered, how much they have expended themselves, and what price they have paid. They use these things as the capital by which they exalt themselves, which gives them a higher, firmer, more secure place in people's minds, so that more people esteem, admire, respect, and even venerate, idolize, and follow them. To achieve this aim, people do many things that testify to God on the surface, but essentially exalt and testify to themselves. Is acting that way reasonable? They are beyond the purview of rationality. These people have no shame: They unabashedly testify to what they have done for God and how much they have suffered for Him. They even flaunt their gifts, talents, experience, special skills, their clever techniques for conducting themselves, the means they use to toy with people, and so on. Their method of exalting and testifying to themselves is to flaunt themselves and belittle others. They also dissemble and camouflage themselves, hiding their weaknesses, shortcomings, and deficiencies from people so that they only ever see their brilliance. They do not even dare to tell other people when they feel negative; they lack the courage to open up and fellowship with them, and when they do something wrong, they do their utmost to conceal it and cover it up. Never do they mention the harm they have caused to the work of the church in the course of doing their duty. When they have made some minor contribution or achieved some small success, however, they are quick to show it off. They cannot wait to let the whole world know how capable they are, how high their

caliber is, how exceptional they are, and how much better they are than normal people. Is this not a way of exalting and testifying to themselves? Is exalting and testifying to oneself something someone with conscience and reason does? It is not. So when people do this, what disposition is usually revealed? Arrogance is one of the chief dispositions revealed, followed by deceitfulness, which involves doing everything possible to make other people hold them in high esteem. Their stories are completely watertight; their words clearly contain motivations and schemes, they are showing themselves off, yet they want to hide this fact. The outcome of what they say is that people are made to feel that they are better than others, that no one is their equal, that everyone else is inferior to them. And is this outcome not achieved via underhanded means? What disposition is behind such means? And are there any elements of wickedness? (There are.) **This is a kind of wicked disposition”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Four: They Exalt and Testify About Themselves). Reading God’s words felt like a direct blow to my heart. I could see what was hidden deep within me. I had always wanted to construct an image of myself as a strong man, a perfect person. I liked talking about my elevated understanding and my successful experiences to leave people with a positive impression, but I hardly ever talked about my weaknesses or actual difficulties. If I was feeling weak or negative, or faced with some problems, or even when I was in my worst state, I’d just act like everything was great in order to protect my pride and reputation. But in fact, I was really in pain. Seeing others’ admiration and adoration for me, I had some awareness of it, and I knew this wasn’t good. But I hadn’t told people not to adore me, because I wanted everyone’s admiration, adoration and praise. Wasn’t I just as arrogant as the archangel? I wasn’t bringing others before God, but I was bringing them before myself. When I realized I

could be taking God's place in the brothers' and sisters' hearts, I was trembling with fear and knew in my heart that God detested my behavior. I was full of remorse and prayed to God, "God, I've been showing off, wanting everyone to see me as a good leader, above everyone else. I'm usurping Your glory. Oh God, I want to repent to You." Then I wrote a repentance letter revealing how I showed off and elevated myself and sent it to every gathering group. I also told everyone unequivocally that they shouldn't adore me. I knew a few brothers and sisters who particularly adored me, so I sent them individual messages opening up and dissecting myself. A few days later, Sister Marinette told me frankly that she had adored me before and that I had held an important place in her heart. I was really ashamed to hear this and felt like it was evidence of my evil. I saw my own ugliness in that moment, and felt like I'd lost all reason, getting the others to worship me. How was that doing a duty? Was that what God hoped for when He gave me this duty? I felt really uneasy and ashamed. But I still didn't really seek the truth to resolve my corruption, so before long I fell back into my old ways.

One day I went to a gathering that other church leaders attended, too. I felt that the brothers' and sisters' fellowship was simplistic and I was unsettled. I felt like their fellowship was shallow and I looked down on them a bit. I wanted to show them that my fellowship was more practical than theirs. So I mentally prepared what I wanted to say. I thought about saying something more enlightening so I could stick out from the crowd and share some weighty fellowship. I thought over the wording to best enrich my fellowship. I really wanted to prove that I had a higher understanding so others would appreciate my insight. During my fellowship I used lots of examples so they would know that my fellowship was detailed and rich. When I was done, I was very satisfied to hear everyone say

“Amen.” Then I rushed to check the chat window to see if the brothers and sisters had said something nice about my fellowship. When we were almost done, Brother Zen shared some fellowship. Instead of quoting God’s words and talking about how we should practice based on God’s words like he used to, he referenced my fellowship. I saw I was exalting myself and showing off again. I felt really mad at myself in that moment. In the gathering we’d just shared some of God’s words with everyone, stating that we need to speak from the heart. How could I be boasting and showing off? I simply didn’t dare believe I was acting that way. I looked up the passages of God’s words we’d read in the gathering so I could give them some careful thought. God says: **“If brothers and sisters are to be capable of confiding in each other, helping each other out, and providing for one another, then each person must speak of their own true experiences. If you say nothing about your own true experiences—if you only preach the words and doctrines that man understands, if you only preach a bit of doctrine about belief in God and give banal platitudes, and do not open up about what’s in your heart—then you are not an honest person, and you are incapable of being an honest person”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). **“When bearing testimony for God, you should mainly talk about how God judges and chastises people, and what trials He uses to refine people and change their dispositions. You should also talk about how much corruption has been revealed in your experience, how much you have suffered, how many things you did to resist God, and how you were eventually conquered by God. Talk about how much real knowledge of God’s work you have, and how you should bear witness for God and repay Him for His love. You should put substance into this kind of language, while putting it in a simple manner. Do not talk about**

empty theories. Speak more down-to-earth; speak from the heart. This is how you should experience things. Do not equip yourselves with profound-seeming, empty theories in an effort to show off; doing so makes you appear quite arrogant and senseless. You should speak more about real things from your actual experience, and speak more from the heart; this is most beneficial to others, and most appropriate for them to see” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). I saw from God’s words that I have to open my heart with my brothers and sisters, talk about what is in my heart, share my real experience, and avoid showing off with empty words. Thinking about myself, I was just talking about some empty theories to flaunt myself and gain others’ admiration. The consequences of this were very clear. The others looked up to me and didn’t bear witness to God’s words, but instead used my fellowship as their reference. In gatherings I would frequently hear people saying things like, “Thanks to Brother Matthew’s fellowship” or “Just like Brother Matthew said.” I thought of Paul always elevating himself and being ostentatious, and not bearing witness to the Lord Jesus’ words. That led believers to adore Paul and bear witness to his words for 2,000 years. Wasn’t I doing the same thing as Paul, and on the same antichrist’s path of resisting God? I felt really afraid and hated myself. I said a prayer, “Oh God, I’m making the same mistake again. Your words showed me the way, but I’m still following Satan, satisfying my vainglory. I’m playing the part of Satan again. God, I need Your help, please save me!”

One evening I saw this passage of God’s words: **“Do you know what is the greatest taboo in man’s service of God? Some leaders and workers always want to be different, to be head and shoulders above the rest, to show off, and to figure out some new tricks, in order to**

make God see just how capable they really are. However, they do not focus on understanding the truth and entering the reality of God's words. This is the most foolish way to act. Is this not precisely the revelation of an arrogant disposition? ... In serving God, people wish to make great strides, do great things, speak great words, perform great work, hold great meetings, and be great leaders. If you always have such grand ambitions, then you will violate God's administrative decrees; people who do this will die quickly. If you are not well-behaved, devout, and prudent in your service to God, then sooner or later, you will offend His disposition" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Reading these words from God left me trembling with fear. Through this revelation of God's words, I saw my wild ambition and my desire to achieve great things. I wanted to preside over gatherings and make grand speeches. I loved showing off in gatherings and wanted the brothers' and sisters' adoration, hoping they would think I had good caliber and profound understanding. Driven by these desires, I wanted to preach and show off at every gathering I attended, hoping that others would admire me. I loved that kind of leadership. But when I read **"If you always have such grand ambitions, then you will violate God's administrative decrees; people who do this will die quickly,"** my heart was trembling, and I felt a sense of fear deep in my heart. I thought I'd been satisfying God before, but I now realized I was disgusting Him. I had just wanted to do something great, hold great gatherings, preach something lofty. I wasn't bearing witness for God or practicing the truth, and I wasn't taking on a burden for the brothers' and sisters' lives. I was exalting myself to gain a place in their hearts. This would offend God's disposition. In **"The Ten Administrative Decrees That Must Be Obeyed by God's Chosen People in the Age of Kingdom,"** it states:

1. Man should not magnify himself, nor exalt himself. He should worship and exalt God.

.....

8. People who believe in God should obey God and worship Him. Do not exalt or look up to any person; do not put God first, the people you look up to second, and yourself third. No person should hold a place in your heart, and you should not consider people—particularly those you venerate—to be on a par with God or to be His equal. This is intolerable to God.”

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God

After reading God’s words, I suffered greatly within myself, and I thought God couldn’t possibly forgive me for offending His disposition. I prayed, “God! I’m really in pain and am suffering, I didn’t know I was inciting Your wrath, and I’d like to repent. Oh God! I seek Your enlightenment to understand Your will.”

In my terror, I read this passage of God’s words: **“Today God judges you, chastises you, and condemns you, but you must know that the point of your condemnation is for you to know yourself. He condemns, curses, judges, and chastises so that you might know yourself, so that your disposition might change, and, moreover, so that you might know your worth, and see that all of God’s actions are righteous and in accordance with His disposition and the requirements of His work, that He works in accordance with His plan for man’s salvation, and that He is the righteous God who loves, saves, judges, and chastises man. If you only know that you are of lowly status, that you are corrupt and disobedient, but do not know that God wishes to make plain His salvation through the judgment and chastisement that He does in you**

today, then you have no way of gaining experience, much less are you capable of continuing forward. God has not come to kill or destroy, but to judge, curse, chastise, and save. Until His 6,000-year management plan comes to a close—before He reveals the outcome of each category of man—God’s work on earth will be for the sake of salvation; its purpose is purely to make those who love Him complete—thoroughly so—and to bring them into submission under His dominion” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Put Aside the Blessings of Status and Understand God’s Will to Bring Salvation to Man). Reading this gave me a sense of peace. I thought I’d offended God in an unforgivable way, but that wasn’t the case. Although God was using His words to judge and reveal me, He didn’t hate or condemn me. He wanted me to repent and change. I could see God’s righteous disposition, as well as His mercy and tolerance. I knew this time I had to seek the truth and resolve my corrupt disposition.

Then I read another passage of God’s words: **“To be an honest person, you must first lay your heart bare so that everyone can look into it, see all that you are thinking, and look upon your true face. You must not try to disguise yourself, or cover yourself up. Only then will others trust you and consider you to be an honest person. This is the most fundamental practice, and a prerequisite to being an honest person. If you are always pretending, always feigning holiness, nobility, greatness, and high character; if you do not let people see your corruption and your flaws; if you present a false image to people so that they believe you have integrity, that you’re great, self-denying, just, and selfless—is this not deceitfulness and falsity? Will people not be able to see through you, given time? So, do not put on a disguise or cover yourself up. Instead, lay yourself and your heart bare for others to see. If you can lay your heart bare for others to see, if you can lay**

bare all your thoughts and plans—both positive and negative—isn't that honesty? If you can lay yourself bare for others to see, then God, too, will see you. He will say: 'If you have laid yourself bare for others to see, then you are surely honest before Me.' But if you only lay yourself bare to God when out of view of other people, and always pretend to be great and noble or selfless when in their company, then what will God think of you? What will He say? He will say: 'You are a thoroughly deceitful person. You are thoroughly hypocritical and vile, and you are not an honest person.' God will thus condemn you. If you wish to be an honest person, then regardless of whether you are before God or other people, you should be able to provide a pure and open account of your inner state and the words in your heart. Is this easy to achieve? It requires a period of training, as well as frequent prayer and reliance on God. You must train yourself to speak the words in your heart simply and openly on all matters. With this kind of training, you can make progress" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). Reading this passage of God's word helped me understand what God wanted of me. He wanted me to be an honest person. That is to say, I had to learn to expose my corruption and honest thoughts to others so they could see my weaknesses and shortcomings. If I kept exalting myself without revealing my weaknesses and failures, and instead always used fellowshiping and gatherings to show off, it would be extremely dishonest. It would be cheating my brothers and sisters. I saw I absolutely had to be an honest person. I also gained some understanding of my own mistaken ideas. I thought a leader should be a heroic person without weaknesses, like some director out in the world, on a higher rung than others, better than others. But that's not the kind of leader that God wants. God wants simple, honest people. Such people can open up

about their corruption and shortcomings, and they love and practice the truth. The purpose of their fellowship isn't to show off, but to use their own experience to help the brothers and sisters. I remembered what the Lord Jesus said: **“But be not you called Rabbi: for One is your Master, even Christ; and all you are brothers. ... Neither be you called masters: for One is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted”** (Matthew 23:8–12). I realized that a leader plays the role of a servant, a servant with a heavy responsibility. No matter what, they always have to keep their responsibility in mind, and this responsibility is to water and support their brothers and sisters, and seek the truth to help them resolve problems. A leader is not an officer and isn't above anyone else. But I had been putting on an act during my whole time as a leader, hoping people would admire and idolize me. Was this not contrary to God's requirements? God is the Creator, and all humans, no matter how exalted or lowly their position, are created beings, and should worship the Creator. I knew my role and responsibility, that I should stand in the place of a created being and properly do my duty. I had a change in my mindset from that point on and I began to consciously practice being honest. When I noticed I was exalting myself and showing off, I'd open up and consciously expose my corruption and shortcomings. Sometimes that was painful, but it showed me how dishonest I really was. I saw that I had been fooling my brothers and sisters so much. The more I opened up, the more I saw my true colors and true stature. I realized I was never as high and mighty as I'd thought. Before, in all my fellowship with my brothers and sisters, I'd been putting myself up on high, encouraging and helping people with doctrine. But now I started sharing my true state with my brothers and sisters, opening up my heart to them in fellowship.

When I did this, I didn't feel like I was any smarter than the others. Instead, I was able to learn from their experiences and gain illumination and enlightenment from others' fellowship. I'd hardly paid attention to others' fellowship before, arrogantly assuming I was the one providing illumination for others. Now that I was having heartfelt conversations with everyone, I was able to truly listen to the experiences and knowledge fellowshipped by the brothers and sisters. I was less haughty and self-important and could get along with the brothers and sisters on an equal footing. My reason was becoming normal, and I was able to open up my heart during fellowship in gatherings. I'm so grateful to God for this change in me.

Now, sometimes I still catch myself showing off and it shows me how deeply Satan has corrupted me, that this isn't just a passing thing, but is in my bones and in my blood. I need to read God's words more, experience the judgment and revelations of His words, to come to know my corruption and faults, manage to cast off my satanic disposition, and be saved by God. Thank Almighty God!

5. The Struggle to Speak Honestly

By Weniela, the Philippines

I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days in 2017. My time fellowshiping with brothers and sisters was so happy for me because I always got to learn more truths and gain something from each gathering. At first it was all through text chatting, that is, we were typing all of our communication online. So I didn't hold anything back, and I was really active in talking about my understanding of God's words. The leaders would often say I had a good understanding and brothers and sisters looked up to me. They said they liked hearing my fellowship and that my English was good. I was thrilled to hear their praise and I felt I was doing okay. Then a sister suggested we start doing voice calls for gatherings, and problems started to come to the fore.

In the first voice call gathering, after we read God's words, a couple of sisters shared their understanding of the passage first. I was nervous and didn't really hear their fellowship. It had all been by text before, so I wasn't really used to direct fellowship by voice. Vocal communication is my weak point. When it was by text I could pick my words and smooth things out. But using live chat, I didn't have enough time to prepare. Though I had some understanding of God's words, I was afraid that my fellowship would be chaotic and disorganized, that my English wouldn't be fluent, and I was afraid of brothers and sisters being disappointed in me. I was preoccupied with these problems for the entire gathering. I was hesitating on whether I should share or not. If I didn't, the others would be sure to think I wasn't actively engaged in fellowship, and the leaders would be disappointed in me. But if I did, I'd have to turn on the microphone, and I was afraid that if I did poorly, the brothers and sisters would look down on me. It would ruin

my good image with them. These thoughts made me so nervous I couldn't get anything out. The two sisters who had converted me were in the gathering, and I thought they would be disappointed if I didn't fellowship well. Then Flora Shi, a leader, said to me, "Sister Weniela, can you share? Everyone else has. Did you forget to share fellowship?" Her tone of voice made me feel like she was disappointed. I felt really awkward and embarrassed. To hide this shortcoming of mine and maintain my image in their eyes, I decided that from then on I'd write out what I wanted to fellowship before the gathering, and then I could just read it out when it was my turn. Then I wouldn't be so nervous. They'd think I was a fluent speaker and that my fellowship was on point. I thought this was a good idea.

One evening, a couple of sisters from China hosted our gathering. We all used English to communicate out of convenience. Some brothers and sisters were really shy because their English wasn't very good, but they were still able to fellowship on their understanding of God's words. When it was my turn, I was really active in my fellowship and I sounded very confident because I'd written out what I wanted to say beforehand. I was the last one to fellowship. I'd done my best to speak totally naturally so they wouldn't notice I was reading. Afterward, they all complimented my fellowship and said it was helpful for them and that my English was great. I was secretly pleased to hear their praise and felt like I'd won them over. Then I was elected to be group leader and I focused even more on what the others thought of me. But I started to feel guilty and kind of uneasy whenever the others praised me because I wasn't allowing them to see the real me. I didn't feel right about it, but I still kept doing the same things. In gatherings I wasn't truly listening to the others' fellowship because I was busy writing out my own understanding. I was always focused on writing something that sounded good to satisfy my vanity and safeguard my

reputation. It kept me from getting more out of those gatherings and they lost their meaning to me. I knew that acting this way was bad, and I wanted to change, to tell the others the truth, but I didn't dare take that step. I was afraid that if the others knew I'd been writing my fellowship out in advance, they'd look down on me and they might say I was really disingenuous, that I was lying and being deceitful. I wanted to stop doing that plenty of times because it wasn't benefitting me at all, and it left me really uneasy, but that anxiety didn't hold any weight in comparison to my image and others' admiration because I cared more about my face and reputation. But every time I did these things, I felt incredibly guilty. I even tried to convince myself that I was just doing it so I could share my understanding more clearly and accurately, and then the others would be able to understand what I was saying better. I kept telling myself it was okay, but my uneasiness and guilt kept tormenting me. I thought to myself, "If I can let go of my pride and tell everyone the truth, I'll be able to escape this. But I'm scared that if they find out that my English really isn't great, they'll laugh at me. Then how could I face them?" I struggled with this for a long time, but I still didn't manage to open my heart up. Not knowing what else to do, I tried working on my language skills. I practiced fellowshiping on my own at home, recording myself and then listening to see how it sounded. I thought, "If I can improve my speaking skills in this way, then I won't have to keep writing my fellowship out in advance, and could just share directly. Then there'd be no need to tell everyone the truth. As long as I can still fellowship well and my English sounds fluent, I'll hold on to their respect for me." But no matter how much I practiced, I got nervous every time when fellowshiping at gatherings, so I'd just read my fellowship like I'd been doing all along. I was very disappointed in myself

and because I was trapped in a negative state my duties were impacted. I ended up being dismissed.

One time in a gathering, a sister shared this passage of God's words, they moved me a lot, the words of God say: **"If you wish for others to trust you, first you must be honest. To be an honest person, you must first lay your heart bare so that everyone can look into it, see all that you are thinking, and look upon your true face. You must not try to disguise yourself, or cover yourself up. Only then will others trust you and consider you to be an honest person. This is the most fundamental practice, and a prerequisite to being an honest person. If you are always pretending, always feigning holiness, nobility, greatness, and high character; if you do not let people see your corruption and your flaws; if you present a false image to people so that they believe you have integrity, that you're great, self-denying, just, and selfless—is this not deceitfulness and falsity? Will people not be able to see through you, given time? So, do not put on a disguise or cover yourself up. Instead, lay yourself and your heart bare for others to see. If you can lay your heart bare for others to see, if you can lay bare all your thoughts and plans—both positive and negative—Isn't that honesty? If you can lay yourself bare for others to see, then God, too, will see you. He will say: 'If you have laid yourself bare for others to see, then you are surely honest before Me.' But if you only lay yourself bare to God when out of view of other people, and always pretend to be great and noble or selfless when in their company, then what will God think of you? What will He say? He will say: 'You are a thoroughly deceitful person. You are thoroughly hypocritical and vile, and you are not an honest person.' God will thus condemn you. If you wish to be an honest person, then regardless of whether you are before God or other people,**

you should be able to provide a pure and open account of your inner state and the words in your heart. Is this easy to achieve? It requires a period of training, as well as frequent prayer and reliance on God. You must train yourself to speak the words in your heart simply and openly on all matters. With this kind of training, you can make progress. If you encounter a major difficulty, you must pray to God and seek the truth; you need to fight in your heart and overcome the flesh, until you can practice the truth. In training yourself this way, little by little, your heart will gradually open up. You will become more and more pure, and the effects of your words and actions will be different than before. Your lies and tricks will become fewer and fewer, and you will be able to live before God. You will then, essentially, have become an honest person” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). From God’s word I saw that God likes honest people, and He doesn’t like deviousness or dishonesty. Whether it’s something pretty or ugly, we have to open up our hearts in fellowship, speak without lying, and be without deviousness in our hearts. We must not pretend to be something we’re not before others, and we must not mask ourselves. That is being honest. I felt so guilty when I read these words of God because I wasn’t an honest person. I really wanted to open up to everyone, to let go of my vanity and reputation, but even though I’d tried to quite a few times, I never was able to do this. I craved face too much. I was imprisoned by my own vanity. I saw that I really was incredibly corrupt. I felt really guilty and vexed at the same time. I thought to myself: “Why am I always pretending, giving people a false positive impression of me? Why can’t I practice the truth and stop lying? Was my faith in God all for nothing? Were all those gatherings and all that pursuit of the truth in vain?” I felt like I couldn’t escape the bonds of my own vanity. I wanted to leave

our group and take some time to readjust myself into the right state, and once I had properly readjusted my state, I could come back to gatherings and stop doing those things. So I dropped out of the group and stopped using my account, wanting to be alone and reflect on myself. I was really upset and frustrated for a while, and lonely, too. I was really disappointed in myself. I'd been a believer for two years, but I was still struggling to be honest and let go of my vanity. I cared too much about others' opinion of me. Just imagining the others' reactions after knowing the truth would make me feel really ashamed.

All I could do during that time was read God's words. One day I saw this passage: **"To pursue the truth, one must focus on practicing the truth, but where should one begin to practice the truth? There are no rules for this. You should practice whichever aspects of the truth you understand. If you have started a duty, then you should start practicing the truth in the performance of your duty. In the performance of your duty, there are many aspects of the truth to practice, and you should practice whichever aspects of the truth you understand. For example, you can start by being an honest person, by speaking honestly, and by opening your heart. If there is something about which you are too embarrassed to speak with your brothers and sisters, then you should kneel down and tell it to God through prayer. What should you say to God? Tell God what is in your heart; do not give empty pleasantries or attempt to deceive Him. Start with being honest. If you have been weak, then say you have been weak; if you have been evil, then say you have been evil; if you have been deceitful, then say you have been deceitful; if you have had vicious and insidious thoughts, tell God about them. If you are always competing for status, tell Him this, too. Let God discipline you; let Him arrange environments for you. Allow God**

to help you get through all your difficulties and resolve all your problems. You should open up your heart to God; do not keep it shut. Even if you shut Him out, He can still see into you. However, if you open up your heart to Him, you can gain the truth. So which path should you choose? You should open up your heart and tell God what is in your heart. By no means should you say anything false or disguise yourself. You should start by being an honest person. For years, we have been fellowshiping on the truth concerning being an honest person, and yet today there are still many people who remain indifferent, who speak and act only according to their own intents, desires, and aims, and to whom it has never occurred to repent. This is not the attitude of people who are honest. Why does God ask people to be honest? Is it to make it easier to understand people? Certainly not. God requires people to be honest because God loves and blesses honest people. Being an honest person means being a person with conscience and reason. It means being someone who is trustworthy, someone whom God loves, and someone who can practice the truth and love God. Being an honest person is the most fundamental manifestation of possessing normal humanity and living out a true human likeness. If someone has never been honest, or considered being honest, then they cannot understand the truth, much less can they gain the truth. If you don't believe Me, go and see for yourself, or go and experience this for yourself. Only by being an honest person can your heart be open to God, can you accept the truth, can the truth become your life, and can you understand and gain the truth. If your heart is always closed, if you don't open up or say what is in your heart to anyone, such that no one can understand you, then your walls are too thick, and you are the most deceitful of people. If you believe in God yet cannot purely open

yourself up to God, if you can lie to God or exaggerate to deceive God, if you are incapable of opening your heart to God, and can still speak in circles and hide your intentions, then you will only harm yourself, and God will ignore you and not work in you. You won't understand any of the truth, and you won't gain any of the truth" (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). This passage showed me that understanding the truth is more important than anything, more than my face and my vanity. To gain the truth, I had to start with being honest. One is one, and two is two—no more pretending or cheating. For quite a while, I'd been putting on an act, deceiving the others. I'd write out what I wanted to fellowship so they'd think I had a good understanding and I spoke English well, then they'd keep praising me and looking up to me. Although I was riddled with guilt and anxiety, I didn't have the courage to open up to the brothers and sisters. I didn't want them to see my inadequacies and look down on me, to say I was a liar. I even preferred leaving our group over telling them the truth. I really was devious. I realized that being so depressed was the harm that Satan was doing to me and that living in this way was holding me back in my life entry. It could even ruin me. I should muster up the courage to tell the others what was really in my heart so I could actually practice some honesty. No matter how awkward it was to tell the truth, I knew I had to get away from doing things the wrong way. God likes honest people and is disgusted by devious people. If I kept putting on an act, giving the others a false impression and not being forthright, I'd keep living in darkness and I'd never be able to gain the Holy Spirit's work. I'd never gain the truth. I had to open myself wide to God so that He could help me resolve this deceptiveness within me. So I said a prayer, asking God to guide me to practice the truth and be an honest person.

Later on, I finally opened up and fellowshiped with our leader, Sister Connie. I told her why I'd left our group and disabled my account. After hearing me out, Sister Connie said, "I'd never look down on you for that, and I really appreciate your honesty." I was incredibly relieved to open up and fellowship with her. I truly experienced how wonderful it is to be honest, because practicing the truth freed me from all of my anxiety. Sister Connie also gave me some advice, that when I'm sharing my understanding of God's words, I don't need to speak really eloquently or to share any sort of high-level theories. It's enough for it to come from the heart, for it to be what I really feel and know. I took her suggestion and felt ready to put it into practice.

Later on, another sister sent me a passage of God's words that was very enlightening. The words of God say: **"Instead of searching for the truth, most people have their own petty agendas. Their own interests, face, and the place or standing they hold in other people's minds are of great importance to them. These are the only things they cherish. They cling to these things with an iron grip and regard them as their very lives. And how they are viewed or treated by God is of secondary importance; for the moment, they ignore that; for the moment, they only consider whether they are the boss of the group, whether other people look up to them, and whether their words carry weight. Their first concern is with occupying that position. When they are in a group, almost all people look for this kind of standing, these kinds of opportunities. When they're highly talented, of course they want to be top dog; if they are of middling ability, they'll still want to hold a higher position in the group; and if they hold a low position in the group, being of average caliber and abilities, they, too, will want others to look up to them, they won't want others to look down on them."**

These people's face and dignity are where they draw the line: They have to hold on to these things. They could have no integrity, and be possessed of neither God's approval nor acceptance, but they absolutely cannot lose the respect, status, or esteem they have strived for among others—which is the disposition of Satan. But people have no awareness of this. It is their belief that they must cling to this scrap of face to the very end. They are not aware that only when these vain and superficial things are completely relinquished and put aside will they become a real person. If a person guards these things that should be discarded as life, their life is lost. They do not know what is at stake. And so, when they act, they always hold something back, they always try to protect their own face and status, they put these first, speaking only for their own ends, to their own spurious defense. Everything they do is for themselves. They rush to anything that shines, letting everyone know they were a part of it. It didn't actually have anything to do with them, but they never want to be left in the background, they're always afraid of other people looking down on them, they're always fearful of other people saying they're nothing, that they are incapable of anything, that they have no skills. Is this all not directed by their satanic dispositions? When you are able to let go of things like face and status, you will be much more relaxed and freer; you will have set foot on the path to being honest. But for many, this is not easy to achieve. When the camera appears, for example, people scramble to the front; they like having their face on camera, the more coverage the better; they're afraid of not getting enough coverage, and will pay any price for the chance to get it. And is this not all directed by their satanic dispositions? These are their satanic dispositions. So you get coverage—what then? People think highly of you—so what? They idolize you—

so what? Does any of this prove you have the truth reality? None of this has any value. When you can overcome these things—when you become indifferent to them, and no longer feel them important, when face, vanity, status, and people’s admiration no longer control your thoughts and behavior, much less how you perform your duty—then your performance of your duty will become ever more effective, and ever more pure” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three).

God exposes how people value their face and status more than their lives, and the first thing they think of when faced with something is their reputation, vanity, and position, and not God’s will at all. God doesn’t want us to put on an act, and He doesn’t want us to put our reputation first or pursue our status among people. These things aren’t what help us gain God’s approval, and they can’t make us change our dispositions or be saved. Name and status are methods that Satan uses to corrupt and bind us, and pursuing these things makes us more and more vain and devious. That way we ultimately lose God’s salvation. God doesn’t like devious people and He doesn’t want people to play games to gain others’ praise or admiration. He wants us to let go of our reputation and status, to pursue the truth and be honest people. Whether it’s before God or before others, we can’t be deceitful or disingenuous. I’d consistently failed to open up and share my struggles with the others because I was too concerned with my face and vanity. Firmly in the clutches of my satanic disposition, I was unable to practice the truth. My desire for face and status was too strong.

Later on I read another passage of God’s words: **“Would you say that using small favors to buy people off and draw people in, or showing off, or deceiving people with illusions is the right path to take, despite how many benefits and how much satisfaction a person might outwardly seem to obtain from this? Is it a path of pursuing the truth? Is it a path**

that can bring about one's salvation? Very clearly not. These methods and tricks, regardless of how brilliantly they might have been conceived, could not fool God, and are all ultimately condemned and loathed by God, because hidden behind such behaviors is personal ambition and a sort of attitude and essence of wishing to put oneself against Him. Deep down, God would absolutely never recognize such a person as one who is fulfilling their duty, and would instead define them as an evildoer. What is God's conclusion when dealing with evildoers? 'Depart from Me, you that work iniquity!' When God says, 'Depart from Me,' where does He want such people to go? He is handing them over to Satan, to the places inhabited by throngs of Satans. What is the ultimate consequence for them? They are tormented to death by evil spirits, which is to say they are swallowed by Satan. God no longer wants this kind of person. Not wanting them means He would not save them. They are not one of God's flock, let alone one of His followers, so they are not among the ones He will save. **This is how such a person is defined**" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item One: They Try to Win People Over). From God's words I saw that people are hypocritical and fake to steal a place in other people's hearts. Though they gain others' respect and their ambitions and desires are satisfied, what do they get in the end? By acting in this way they can fool people for a moment, but they can't fool God. In the end they will be spurned and cast out by God. Because God is holy, He hates those who don't pursue the truth and harbor their own intentions, who want to occupy a place in others' hearts. He sees them as evildoers and He doesn't acknowledge the duties they do. I reflected on my behavior and realized that I had truly taken the path of opposing God, because all of my thoughts and actions were for the sake of being praised and admired by others. If I kept on this way,

ultimately I'd just be ruined. At this thought I had several fears, I was afraid that I would be abandoned by God, I was afraid that God would hand me over to Satan, and I was afraid that I would lose the salvation of God. I genuinely wanted to change and escape that state, to be my true self, and to never again lie or be deceitful.

But when the time to truly practice came, at the thought of opening up to the brothers and sisters about my corruption and shortcomings, I really hesitated. Then I saw another passage of God's words that gave me courage. The word of God says: **"You must seek the truth to resolve any problem that arises, no matter what it is, and by no means disguise yourself or put on a false face for others. Your shortcomings, your deficiencies, your faults, your corrupt dispositions—be completely open about them all, and fellowship about them all. Do not keep them inside. Learning how to open yourself up is the first step toward life entry, and it is the first hurdle, which is the most difficult to overcome. Once you have overcome it, entering the truth is easy. What does taking this step signify? It means that you are opening your heart and showing everything you have, good or bad, positive or negative; baring yourself for others and for God to see; hiding nothing from God, concealing nothing, disguising nothing, free of deceit and trickery, and being likewise open and honest with other people. In this way, you live in the light, and not only will God scrutinize you, but other people will also be able to see that you act with principle and a degree of transparency. You do not need to use any methods to protect your reputation, image, and status, nor do you need to cover up or disguise your mistakes. You do not need to engage in these useless efforts. If you can let these things go, you will be very relaxed, you will live without shackles or pain, and you will live entirely in the light. Learning how to be open when you**

fellowship is the first step to life entry. Next, you need to learn to analyze your thoughts and actions to see which are wrong and which God does not like, and you need to reverse them immediately and rectify them. What is the purpose of rectifying them? It is to accept and take on board the truth, while getting rid of the things within you that belong to Satan and replacing them with the truth. Before, you did everything according to your crafty disposition which is lying and deceitful; you felt that you could get nothing done without lying. Now that you understand the truth, and despise Satan's ways of doing things, you no longer act that way, you act with a mentality of honesty, purity, and obedience. If you hold nothing back, if you do not put on a front, a pretense, or cover things up, if you lay yourself bare to the brothers and sisters, do not hide your innermost ideas and thoughts, but instead allow others to see your honest attitude, then the truth will gradually take root in you, it will blossom and bear fruit, it will yield results, little-by-little. If your heart is increasingly honest, and increasingly oriented toward God, and if you know to protect the interests of God's house when you perform your duty, and your conscience is troubled when you fail to protect these interests, then this is proof that the truth has had an effect in you, and has become your life" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). From God's word I understood that God's words really can change people. When we learn how to open up about our true corruption and seek the truth, our mistaken ideas and corrupt dispositions can gradually be changed. God exposed my wrong thinking and revealed my mistaken pursuit of name and status, then guided me through His words to find the correct path of practice. I had to take the first step to open up to the others, to stop thinking

of my name and face, to stop being devious, deceitful, and disingenuous. I had to practice God's words and allow them to lead the way within me.

That Sunday morning, I joined the gathering like usual and told myself I had to be genuine. I prayed, "Dear God, this time I want to practice the truth, to escape the bonds of Satan and reveal my hypocrisy and deceit. Even if they look down on me, I just want to be an honest person to satisfy You. Please help me so that I can be open and honest." I felt more relaxed after this prayer. During our gathering, I really gave thought to God's words and diligently listened to the others' fellowship on their experience and understanding, and I wasn't using that time to write out my own fellowship, and I didn't think about what sort of fellowship everyone else would like. When I did that, I gained new enlightenment from the others' fellowship of their experiences. When I was about to fellowship, although I was quite nervous, I wasn't thinking about how good or eloquent my fellowship was, and I didn't mind what they would say after they knew. I talked about a passage of God's words that had really moved me: **"Honesty means giving your heart to God, being genuine with God in all things, being open with Him in all things, never hiding the facts, not trying to deceive those above and below you, and not doing things only to curry favor with God. In short, to be honest is to be pure in your actions and words, and to deceive neither God nor man. ... If you have many confidences that you are reluctant to share, if you are highly averse to laying bare your secrets—your difficulties—before others to seek the way of the light, then I say that you are someone who will not attain salvation easily, and who will not easily emerge from the darkness"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). I related this passage of God's words to my own experience, revealing to my brothers and sisters my absolute truest face. I told them, "All this time, I've been putting on a

great act, pretending to speak fluent English. The truth is that I was writing out all of my fellowship beforehand and even recording it to practice so it would sound natural, so you'd all think I could fellowship well. It was just to gain your praise, and admiration. I've been deceiving you. ..." I thought they'd be disappointed in me, but this wasn't the case, they told me I didn't need to worry about not fellowshiping well. God wants us to be genuine, not flowery and impractical. If I didn't fellowship from the heart, and it was just words and doctrines, what good was that? I was so moved by this. They didn't look down on me at all, and some of them said they could understand where I was coming from, and that my experience helped them. This was a pleasant surprise for me. After opening up to everyone about my corruption, I felt released. Satan uses vanity and reputation to bind me and keep me from practicing the truth, but when I learned about myself through God's words, practicing being an honest person and opening up honestly, I felt I'd taken a step closer to God and removed these doubts and barriers between me and my brothers and sisters. For so long, I'd chosen to disguise myself in order to satisfy my vanity and revel in others' praise, but that wasn't what God wanted. In fact, I'd been hurting God for so long. But God was always forgiving and patient, waiting for me to turn around. I'm incredibly grateful for God's love.

This experience taught me the paramount importance of pursuing the truth. The only way to escape the shackles of a satanic disposition is to be an honest person and practice the truth. The only way to gain true happiness and peace is to practice the truth. I used to be so sly, so hypocritical, but now I decide to practice the truth and be honest. This is what's most important to me. All I want is for God to keep guiding me so that I can put more truth into practice.

6. Angel's Story

By Angel, Myanmar

I met Sister Tina on Facebook in August 2020. She told me that the Lord Jesus had returned, that He was expressing many truths, and doing the last days' judgment work. She also told me the prophecies about Him returning to do this judgment work: **“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God”** (1 Peter 4:17). **“And if any man hears My words, and believes not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejects Me, and receives not My words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”** (John 12:47–48). **“I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth”** (John 16:12–13). Having read this and listened to Tina's fellowship, I understood that all the Lord Jesus did was the work of redemption. Though the sins of the faithful have been absolved, our sinful natures remain unresolved. Though we go to church, pray, and confess, we continue to lie and sin, unable to escape the bonds of sin. We need God to perform the work of judgment and cleansing, so that we may truly break free of these bonds and be worthy of entering God's kingdom. Tina's fellowship was very enlightening, she told me things I'd never heard in church. I was willing to seek and investigate.

Two brothers came to our village to spread the gospel and I hosted them. One time, over twenty villagers came to my house to hear them preach. They thought Almighty God's word was great and took great sustenance from it, and wanted to keep investigating. The next day, the pastors and elders heard about the brothers and their gospel preaching, and came to stop me. As soon as he walked through the door, Pastor Taylor

asked me: “Who’s come to your house to preach?” My nerves wound tight at the sight of their stern expressions. I worried that if the pastors knew the two brothers had come to preach the gospel it would mean trouble for them. So I said: “They’re friends I met online.” Pastor Colin then said: “We heard that they came to spread their gospel. You must not host them again! If I find out that you have, I’ll tell your husband you’ve been hosting men here!” I was so angry when he said that. I’d only been hosting them while they spread the gospel to the villagers. I hadn’t done anything shameful, but the pastor was willing to lie and threaten me. Pastor Taylor then said: “Don’t believe their gospel, the Lord Jesus clearly said: **‘Then if any man shall say to you, See, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect’** (Matthew 24:23–24). Many false Christs will emerge in the last days. Any preaching that the Lord has come is false. Don’t be taken in by them! I’m saying this to protect you. I fear you’ll be deceived.” At the time, I had no discernment of the pastors’ words, I thought that they’d been believers for so long and understood so much, and what they said accorded with the Bible. What would I do if they were right, and I really was being led astray? So, I believed them. Members of The Church of Almighty God sought me out for gatherings, but I made up excuses to decline, even changed my Facebook account, and thoroughly cut ties with them.

I didn’t gather for about two weeks. I whiled away my days at home chatting with friends online and watching videos. I was so bored. I’d often think back on my days gathering with believers in Almighty God, when my heart was full and happy, but now I was growing ever more uneasy. I thought: “If Almighty God really is the Lord Jesus returned, will I miss out on His salvation if I don’t accept Him? But the pastors said that false

Christs would emerge in the last days to deceive people and that any preaching that the Lord has come is false. What if I'm deceived?" I felt so conflicted and confused, so I prayed to the Lord, seeking: "Oh Lord Jesus, I have no discernment and don't know who to listen to. Please enlighten me to understand Your will and not lose Your salvation." After praying, I realized that I couldn't just run away and not seek, I had to find the brothers and sisters from The Church of Almighty God to clear up these issues. But to my surprise, the pastors found out after just two gatherings. They called a few of us brothers and sisters who had gathered together for a meeting at Pastor Taylor's house that evening. I was quite nervous. I had no idea what the pastors were going to do. That evening, we went to Pastor Taylor's house. Some other pastors and elders were there too. Pastor Taylor said: "I hear that you've been attending online sermons recently. Why have you been attending sermons from The Church of Almighty God instead of ours? So long as you come to church, listen to our sermons, and pray and confess to the Lord, then when the Lord returns, you will certainly be taken into heaven." I thought: "Those who believe in God should listen to His words. The pastors and elders are always making us listen to their words—aren't they bringing people before themselves instead of God?" I disagreed with what the pastor said, but I didn't dare refute him. Pastor Taylor then handed us a notebook and yelled: "Will you keep believing in other Gods? Make your choice now! Your names are here, hurry up and sign! If you choose to stop believing, leave a tick, if not, leave an X. You're going to be in a lot of trouble if you keep believing in other Gods! We will no longer help your families with things like weddings, funerals, childbirth or building your homes." Where I live, we really value those customs, and without the pastors' support, the villagers wouldn't help us either. Back then, I was a little weak. I thought: "My family is planning to build a house. By village

customs, this must be presided over by the pastors and elders. If they don't take charge, nobody will come to help. If I continue to attend gatherings online, it'll be difficult when something happens at home. But I've read the words of Almighty God and they seem like the voice of the Lord, Almighty God may well be the Lord Jesus returned. If I listen to the pastors and forsake Almighty God, won't I be resisting the Lord?" At this thought, I left an X in the notebook. The others left Xs one after another. Only one person left a tick. The pastor was furious and said: "When you have problems in the future, the villagers won't come to help you. We won't pray for you either. After this we're done!"

I was angry, but at the same time, confused. What about the false Christs the pastors spoke about? I sought from the two sisters I gathered with. One of them read me some of Almighty God's word: **"God become flesh is called Christ, and so the Christ that can give people the truth is called God. There is nothing excessive about this, for He possesses the essence of God, and possesses God's disposition, and wisdom in His work, that are unattainable by man. Those who call themselves Christ, yet cannot do the work of God, are frauds. Christ is not merely the manifestation of God on earth, but also the particular flesh assumed by God as He carries out and completes His work among man. This flesh cannot be supplanted by just any man, but is a flesh that can adequately bear God's work on earth, and express the disposition of God, and well represent God, and provide man with life. Sooner or later, those who impersonate Christ will all fall, for although they claim to be Christ, they possess none of the essence of Christ. And so I say that the authenticity of Christ cannot be defined by man, but is answered and decided by God Himself"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Christ of the Last Days Can Give Man the Way of Eternal Life). After this,

she fellowshiped: “How can we discern the real Christ from the false ones? Christ is the Spirit of God made flesh, come to earth as a human. He is the embodiment of the truth, the arrival of the Savior. Christ can express truths and unveil mysteries. He can cleanse and save man and perform the work of God Himself. False Christs are, in essence, demons. No matter how they claim to be God, they cannot express the truth and they cannot perform God’s work of saving mankind. They can only preach some words of the Bible or imitate God, performing some miracles to beguile people.” She then gave me an analogy. If there are ten people in white coats with stethoscopes, all claiming to be doctors, but only one is a real doctor, how can we distinguish the real from the fake ones? We can’t just look at their clothes or demeanor, the key thing is to see if they can treat illnesses. If they can do this, then they are a doctor. We can’t just look at appearances when discerning Christ. We have to decide this based on His work, words, and the disposition He reveals. If He can express truths and do the work of saving mankind, then He is Christ. When reading Almighty God’s word we can all see that His words are the truth, that they have power and authority. He reveals the mysteries of God’s six-thousand-year management plan, His three stages of work, His incarnation, and His names, and the inside story of the Bible. He also reveals the truth and essence of man’s corruption by Satan, and the source of man’s rebellion against and resistance to God, which helps people know their corrupt dispositions. He tells us things like which kind of people He likes, which He loathes, which kind can enter God’s kingdom, and which will be punished. He also reveals to us His righteous, unoffendable disposition. Almighty God has expressed all the truths that corrupt mankind needs to be saved and is doing the judgment work of the last days. From this, we can be certain that Almighty God is God incarnate and Christ of the last days. False Christs cannot express

truths or perform God's work of saving mankind, much less can they resolve man's corrupt dispositions. No matter how much they call themselves God, they are false and they are evil spirits, and they will fall. My heart felt much brighter after the sister's fellowship. I understood that I couldn't go on the pastors' or elders' words to discern the true Christ, that the key thing is to see if He can express truths and perform the work of saving mankind. Almighty God has expressed so many truths, revealed so many of the Bible's mysteries, and performed the work of judging and cleansing man. These are things no human could have done. I became absolutely certain that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned. After this, I often gathered with the brothers and sisters in my village.

In April of 2021, my husband's old illness returned and he passed away. My relatives wanted the pastors to come and help pray and arrange the ceremonies, but the pastors and elders mocked me and took the chance to compel me to renounce my faith. The village tract leader went along with them, berating me for not listening to them, and forbidding the villagers from helping me. Then he said: "If you just confess to everyone, promise to renounce Almighty God, and attend church congregations, we will help you bury your husband." I'd never imagined they'd use my husband's burial to coerce me out of my faith. It was so despicable and hateful. I had no reason to confess to them. I could only cry as I held my five-month-old son. When I didn't respond, they got my family to threaten me into admitting I was wrong. There was nobody there to speak up for me. Shaking all over, I felt hopelessly alone. I thought: "If I don't say I was wrong, nobody will help me bury my husband, but if I do, I'll be denying and betraying God. What should I do?" In my pain, I called out to God: "Almighty God! I believe that You are God Himself, the unique Creator of all, that You are Almighty God of hosts, and that all is within Your hands. I am willing to submit to

Your arrangements.” After I prayed, I recalled a passage of God’s word I had read: **“In every step of work that God does within people, externally it appears to be interactions between people, as if born of human arrangements or from human disturbance. But behind the scenes, every step of work, and everything that happens, is a wager made by Satan before God, and requires people to stand firm in their testimony to God. Take when Job was tried, for example: Behind the scenes, Satan was making a bet with God, and what happened to Job was the deeds of men and the disturbance of men. Behind every step of work that God does in you is Satan’s wager with God—behind it all is a battle. ... When God and Satan do battle in the spiritual realm, how should you satisfy God, and how should you stand firm in your testimony to Him? You should know that everything that happens to you is a great trial and the time when God needs you to bear testimony”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). I understood that though it seemed like it was the pastors and village tract leader persecuting and obstructing me, in fact, this was all Satan’s deception and disruption. Though they said it was for my own good, they were really using village customs around things like funerals, weddings, childbirth, and homebuilding to make the villagers abandon me, and force me to deny and betray God. They also wanted to pull me back to their religion, to keep me following and obeying them. God has long since left the churches of the Age of Grace to do the last days’ judgment work. If I listened to the pastors and village tract leader and returned to the church with them, I would lose my chance to be saved by God, and I’d be sent to hell and punished with them. That was Satan’s sinister intention. No matter how they stood in my way, I couldn’t listen to them. I had to pray, rely on God, stand firm in my testimony, and shame Satan. But I still needed help

with my husband's funeral affairs, that was a practical problem. The villagers, my relatives and friends were all listening to the village tract leader and pastors and wouldn't help me, so what was I to do? I kept calling out to God: "Almighty God, whether anyone comes to help me bury my husband is entirely in Your hands. I entrust these matters to You. No matter what, I will submit to You and never betray You." I felt a bit calmer and less pained after praying. Just then, I heard my uncle outside saying: "I'm begging you, please help, I apologize on her behalf." The village tract leader said: "She has to apologize herself." I thought: "These pastors and elders are so inhumane. They're even worse than a good unbeliever! They'd do anything to get me to betray God, but the more they try, the more I must stand firm in my testimony to shame Satan." I received an unexpected call from my mother about ten minutes later. She said: "Don't despair, some of your husband's army friends will help you bury him, they're already on the way." At the time, I felt so moved. God had sent people to help me through that crisis when I was at my most helpless. I recalled a passage of God's word: **"You know that all things in the environment that surrounds you are there by My permission, all planned by Me. See clearly and satisfy My heart in the environment I have given to you. Do not fear, the Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He stands behind you and He is your shield"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 26). I saw that everything is in God's hands. So long as we truly rely on God, He will open up a path for us. Though I was still being persecuted, I saw God's guidance, my heart became unyielding, and I was no longer negative or weak.

After my husband's funeral was arranged, his mother would often scold me, saying that the villagers were avoiding us because I'd betrayed the Lord Jesus and believed in the wrong God. My relatives also attacked

me on those grounds. Even my mother's family didn't dare come near me. Only my mother would come see me, though she kept urging me: "Why don't you listen to the pastors, village tract leader, or village head? Look at you, you don't have a husband anymore, if you don't rely on these people or your in-laws, who can you turn to? Your child is still so young. You should confess and stop believing in Almighty God!" Wherever I went, the villagers would talk about me behind my back and my affairs were the topic of gossip. I'd gotten along fine with the other villagers and my neighbors before, but now they were persecuting and ostracizing me just because of my faith. It really hurt me and got me down. At that time, the internet was cut off in Myanmar. So I couldn't gather or listen to sermons online, and the other members didn't dare come to my house to fellowship God's word and help me. It felt like I had fallen into darkness and couldn't see the light. All I could do was pray to God every day, asking Him to guide me out of those dark days. One day, I received a text of God's word: **"Do not be discouraged, do not be weak, and I will make things clear for you. The road to the kingdom is not so smooth; nothing is that simple! You want blessings to come to you easily, do you not? Today, everyone will have bitter trials to face. Without such trials, the loving heart you have for Me will not grow stronger and you will not have true love for Me. Even if these trials consist merely of minor circumstances, everyone must pass through them; it's just that the difficulty of the trials will vary from one person to another. Trials are a blessing from Me, and how many of you come often before Me and beg on your knees for My blessings? Silly children! You always think that a few auspicious words count as My blessing, yet you do not recognize that bitterness is one of My blessings"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). Reading that, I felt very moved. It was like suddenly

taking a potent medicine in the depths of illness and I was filled with faith and strength. Pondering God's word, I understood that it's not easy following God, everyone has to undergo pain and tribulation. Though my body was suffering, this could impel me to pray and rely on God often. And the more I suffered, the more motivated I was to seek the truth. Without realizing it, I had gained some knowledge of God's sovereignty, my relationship with God had grown closer, and I was more determined to follow Him. I'd believed in the Lord since I was a child, but I'd only known to enjoy the grace, blessings, peace, and happiness He gave me. I'd never gone through any pain or trials. I'd not known anything about the Lord, much less about discerning people. But as a believer in Almighty God, through these persecutions and hardships, I'd suffered a little, but I'd learned to discern people, I saw clearly the ugly, deceptive, God-resisting faces of the pastors and elders. Before, because I'd seen that the pastors could explain the Bible and pray for us, I'd thought that they cared for us, understood the Bible and knew God. But when they heard the Lord Jesus had returned, they were unwilling to seek or investigate. They also obstructed believers from investigating God's work, using the village customs to threaten me and inciting the villagers to attack me and coerce me into forsaking Almighty God. I saw that they were hypocritical Pharisees and I rejected them completely. Thinking back on those days of pain and depression, without the guidance of God's word, I may have been driven mad by those demons. It was with God's word that I got through all these difficulties. I am truly grateful to Almighty God! After some time, the internet came back on in Myanmar. I contacted some other members and gathered with them. But the pastors' and village tract leader's persecution only worsened.

One day in January 2022, they called a village meeting. Around three hundred people attended. They made fourteen of us faithful squat outside in the hot sun. The village tract leader said: “There cannot be two faiths in this village. I have called this meeting so that you followers of Almighty God can make a choice. On behalf of the whole village, I ask you, will you continue believing in Almighty God, or will you return to the church?” They called over our relatives to try and persuade us one by one. Brother Robert’s father was a village head and he pressed him to kneel and confess. Robert said that there’s nothing wrong with believing in Almighty God and refused to kneel. His father said angrily: “You should believe whatever your parents believe. Aren’t you abandoning us by not listening to us and believing in Almighty God?” Robert replied: “I believe in God, when did I say I was abandoning you? I love my parents, but I love God, our Creator, more.” Even angrier than before, his father bellowed: “You are my son! Everything you are is held in my hands! I won’t let you speak to me like this!” Looking at this, the arrogance of these people was even clearer to me. Though they believed in the Lord, they did not have a God-fearing heart, nor did they magnify Him. A government official then said: “China doesn’t allow people to believe in Almighty God, and arrests people who do. We plan to make our own investigations here. Who led you into this faith? Who is your leader?” We all said that we had no leader. Another official then pressed us for answers but we just kept telling him we had no leader. A district government official then asked us: “What do you mean by ‘Almighty God’?” I replied: “Don’t you know? Almighty God is the Lord of creation, the very Lord that created you.” Hearing this infuriated him and he told us to make our final choice. Those who chose to keep believing in Almighty God were to say “continue” and those who would stop were to say “leave.” If we chose “continue,” we’d be reported to the higher-ups to

handle. The village tract leader also said those who chose “continue” had to leave the village, but that those who chose “leave” could stay and return to the church. They then had us state our decisions one by one. Three sisters standing in front of me chose “leave” out of fear of persecution. When my turn came, my mother, with my child on her back, cried out for me to “leave” and to stop believing. It was so painful to look at my mother and child then. If I were arrested, what about them? It’d be so hard for my mother to care for my child. So I prayed, asking God to give me faith. I recalled the words of the Lord Jesus: **“He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that takes not his cross, and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me”** (Matthew 10:37–38). **“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 5:10). And Almighty God says: **“What does God mean when He says that ‘God is the source of man’s life’? It is to make everyone realize this: Our lives and souls all come from God and were created by Him—not from our parents, and certainly not from nature, but given us by God. Only our flesh was born of our parents, as our children are born of us, but their fate is entirely in God’s hands. That we can believe in God is an opportunity given by Him; it is ordained by Him and is His grace. There is therefore no need for you to fulfill your obligation or responsibility to anyone else; you should only fulfill your duty to God as a created being. This is what people must do above anything else, the main thing that should be done as the primary affair of one’s life”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Recognizing One’s Own Misguided Views Can One Truly Transform). I understood that our fate is in God’s hands. Where we are born, who our parents are, what difficulties we encounter—all these things have long been determined by

God. Though I gave birth to my child, all I can do for him is my duty as a mother, that is, to look after him. But I cannot change his fate or what happens to him. Some children are orphaned when they are young, but they grow into adults all the same. Just like how my parents divorced when I was little, I didn't have a father to care for me like other children did, but I still grew into a healthy adult. My child's future is determined by God. My mother was still young. Even if I wasn't around, she could look after my child. I had to entrust them to God and submit to His arrangements. I felt more and more that I should choose to believe in and follow God, to stand firm in my testimony to God and shame Satan. So I stood up and said: "I will continue!" The village tract leader said: "Those choosing to continue are mistaken." I replied: "I believe in and follow God. I only listen to His word. This is no mistake!" The official scolded me furiously, calling me an apostate and a traitor to the Lord. But in my heart, I knew Almighty God has expressed many truths and performed the last days' judgment work, and He is the Lord Jesus returned. I'd heard God's voice and accepted the Lord's salvation. I was following the Lamb's footsteps, how is that betraying the Lord? I wanted to refute them so badly, but with all their clamoring, I didn't have a chance to. Elder Lester cursed me as an ungrateful wretch and picked up a plank to beat me. I was so scared and silently prayed to God. To my surprise, my mother-in-law suddenly came forward to stop him. I thanked God for His protection. Another five members then chose to "continue." Seeing that we weren't compromising, they kept questioning us about who our leader was. Nobody responded. We'd been squatting in the sun from nine thirty a.m. to five p.m., over seven hours in a row. Since it was such a long time and we had no food or water, one frail brother with low blood pressure fainted. His family came to help him, but the village tract leader wouldn't let them. He said: "If your

God is the real God, why has he passed out?” After this, seeing we still weren’t giving in, the village tract leader told us to take our family, livestock, and all of our possessions, saying we had to leave the village that same evening. He also said they’d burn down our homes after we left. The district government official said: “Don’t bother wasting time, they’d rather die than say who their leader is. Send them home first. I’ll send their reports to the government tomorrow for the higher-ups to decide on. That’ll scare them.” But I wasn’t that scared. I knew that everything was in God’s hands and that whether the higher officials came or arrested us, it was all in God’s hands and arranged by God.

The morning of the third day, the government called a village tract meeting. More than 400 people were there. I worried they’d force us to blaspheme God and sign an apostasy pledge, so I prayed, asking God to protect us so that we could stand firm in our testimony. At the meeting, the district government head said to us: “You’re all young and don’t understand anything. I’m not here to hold you to account today, but from now on, you must obey your parents, work hard, and stop listening to Almighty God’s words and spreading His gospel, or the village tract leader will arrest you and hand you over to the government.” An official from the administration council said to everyone: “We’ll be treating followers of Almighty God the same way the CCP does. The CCP hunts down and arrests these believers and can beat them to death with impunity. We’ll do the same here in Wa State. All these believers will be arrested, no matter whether they have done anything wrong or not, and then they will be beaten to death with impunity. No one may say things like ‘Those believers did nothing wrong.’ These are the government’s orders. Do not resist, and if you see believers in Almighty God, report them.” He then pointed to us faithful and said to everyone: “Take a good look at their faces, you’ll need to recognize them. These

people believe in Almighty God. If you see them gather or evangelize, report them!” Then he had a district clerk read out materials blaspheming God to everyone. People were deceived by the government’s words, and some looked on us with loathing. What they said made me so angry. I knew the government was persecuting us believers to force us to renounce our faith and to make people timid and afraid to look into Almighty God’s work, so they’d lose God’s salvation. This made me hate those devils even more. The government then let us go home.

When I got home, I read a passage of Almighty God’s word: **“Regardless of how ‘powerful’ Satan is, regardless of how audacious and ambitious it is, regardless of how great is its ability to inflict damage, regardless of how wide-ranging are the techniques with which it corrupts and lures man, regardless of how clever are the tricks and schemes with which it intimidates man, regardless of how changeable is the form in which it exists, it has never been able to create a single living thing, has never been able to set down laws or rules for the existence of all things, and has never been able to rule and control any object, whether animate or inanimate. Within the cosmos and the firmament, there is not a single person or object that was born from it, or exists because of it; there is not a single person or object that is ruled by it, or controlled by it. On the contrary, it not only has to live under the dominion of God, but, moreover, must obey all of God’s orders and commands. Without God’s permission, it is difficult for Satan to touch even a drop of water or grain of sand upon the land; without God’s permission, Satan is not even free to move the ants about upon the land, let alone mankind, who was created by God. In the eyes of God, Satan is inferior to the lilies on the mountain, to the birds flying in the air, to the fish in the sea, and to the maggots on the earth. Its role**

among all things is to serve all things, and work for mankind, and serve God's work and His plan of management. Regardless of how malicious its nature, and how evil its essence, the only thing it can do is to dutifully abide by its function: being of service to God, and providing a counterpoint to God. Such is the substance and position of Satan. Its essence is unconnected to life, unconnected to power, unconnected to authority; it is merely a plaything in God's hands, just a machine in service to God!" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique I).

Reading God's word gave me faith. The pastors and elders could pressure us, the government could arrest and persecute us, and they could use our families to try to coerce us into abandoning Almighty God, but no matter what they said or did, they couldn't do anything to us without God's permission. Like when Elder Lester tried to beat me with a plank, my mother-in-law, who hated me, suddenly stood up for me and stopped him. This was all in God's hands. I felt God's power and sovereignty over all things, and I felt that He was watching over me. I knew that God arranged situations based on my stature and that He wasn't giving me too heavy a burden. Through these experiences, my faith in God grew and I felt that all God does is good. I am so grateful to God! This experience also allowed me to see clearly the God-hating, God-resisting natures of the pastors and elders. God's words say: **"There are those who read the Bible in grand churches and recite it all day long, yet not one among them understands the purpose of God's work. Not one among them is able to know God; still less can any one among them accord with God's will. They are all worthless, vile people, each standing on high to lecture God. They willfully oppose God even as they carry His banner. Claiming faith in God, still they eat the flesh and drink the blood of man. All such people are devils that devour the soul of man, head**

demons that deliberately disturb those trying to step onto the right path, and stumbling blocks impeding those who seek God. They may appear of ‘sound constitution,’ but how are their followers to know that they are none other than antichrists who lead people to stand against God? How are their followers to know that they are living devils dedicated to the devouring of human souls?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. All People Who Do Not Know God Are People Who Oppose God).

The pastors and elders didn’t understand the Bible at all. They only taught the words and doctrines of the Bible, and didn’t welcome the Lord at all, and much less did they seek the truth. Faced with God’s work in the last days, they didn’t seek or investigate, they misinterpreted the Lord’s word, and spread notions to mislead the faithful. By saying that any preaching that the Lord has returned is false, they kept the faithful from hearing God’s voice and welcoming the Lord. They even said that this was to protect the faithful, but really they feared no one would listen to them if everyone followed Almighty God, and that their status and livelihoods would be threatened. That is why they tried to force us to abandon Him. They went so far as to use funeral, wedding, childbirth, and homebuilding customs to threaten me and coerce me into signing an apostasy pledge. They even used my husband’s burial to make me renounce Almighty God. When I didn’t listen, they united with the government and held a village meeting to persecute me, and used my family to tempt me into betraying God. They even wanted to drive us from the village, burn down our homes, and hand us over to the higher officials. They stopped at nothing to persecute us so we’d betray Almighty God and lose our chance to be saved and enter God’s kingdom. Those pastors were truly sinister and vicious! I recalled the Lord Jesus’ condemnation of the Pharisees. The Lord Jesus said: **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of**

heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in. ... Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Matthew 23:13, 15). Under the guise of protecting the flock, the pastors and elders stopped people from accepting God’s work in the last days. They misled people into following them in resisting God and will eventually lead them into hell. They are living devils that stop people from entering God’s kingdom. They are demons and antichrists that resist God and harm people. I saw clearly their essence that hated the truth and God, and I became more steadfast in my faith to follow God. No matter how they tried to mislead or obstruct me, I would not forsake Almighty God. I prayed to God that I would do my duty well and bring more of those who yearn for His appearance before Him to accept His salvation.

As time went on, our gatherings and gospel work continued to be restricted. To stop us believing in Almighty God and gathering online, the village tract leader had officials check our phones every three days and delete Facebook from our phones as soon as they saw it. To avoid being watched by them and the government, we took our farming tools to the mountains and pretended to work so we could gather in secret. We didn’t dare talk freely about our faith in the village normally. But no matter how they persecuted us we still relied on God and kept spreading the gospel to other villages. Over time, more people accepted the gospel. But the village head found out I was spreading the gospel and he pressed me to sell out the others and confess who I’d preached to. When I didn’t say anything, he threatened me, trying to make me renounce my faith and return to the congregation or else he’d have me arrested. In order to gather and preach the gospel normally, and escape persecution and arrest, I fled Myanmar and

went to another country. I now live with some other brothers and sisters. We fellowship, spread the gospel, and testify to God's work. I'm enjoying myself so much. I suffered pain and persecution through all this, but I gained some discernment of the pastors and elders and I can see the government's evil more clearly, and am no longer constrained by them. I also gained some knowledge of God's sovereignty and my faith in Him has grown. These are things I couldn't have gained in a comfortable environment.

7. Freed From Anxiety Over My Illnesses

By Jin Xin, China

My mom got cancer and passed away before I got married and my dad developed high blood pressure when he was 57, causing a blood vessel to rupture, leaving him semi-paralyzed and bedridden for 15 years. He ended up dying in agony. The sight of my dad lying in pain left a dark shadow on my heart. I had high blood pressure and angina. Sometimes, half my head would go numb, and it felt like I was being poked with needles. I also had all sorts of other health issues, and I was on long-term medication. I realized that I had the same symptoms as my father, and I was constantly worried: “I am getting older now. What if I became incapacitated like my father? How could I live with that? How could I do my duty and pursue the truth? If I couldn’t do a duty, how could I be saved?” So, any time symptoms cropped up, I was plagued by feelings of anxiety. One time, a church urgently needed someone to support them. An upper leader talked to me about going to help, but I was thinking: “There are a lot of problems in that church. If I go it will be a big hassle and I’ll have to put a lot into it. I’m already in poor health, so it’ll just tire me out even more. Will my condition keep getting worse? What will I do if I truly get sick?” So, I turned it down. A few months later, that church was really in need of someone, and the upper leader came to talk to me about it again. I felt really guilty. I hadn’t been considerate of God’s will before, and I was pretty troubled after that. I couldn’t turn down that duty again, so I agreed to go.

But as soon as I got to the church, I saw that they weren’t achieving anything with their work, and I felt a lot of pressure. There were lots of issues to address if I wanted to improve the work results, and it would be really hard. My mind was constantly whirling. I started to feel numb in my

head again, and I felt a discomfort, as if bugs were crawling inside my brain. I couldn't sleep and I didn't have any energy during the day. I felt weak all over and didn't have any strength at all. I was kind of worried. Would my condition keep getting worse and worse? If my blood vessels clogged just like my dad's did, would I just collapse? If I became a vegetable, or paralyzed, or even lost my life, how could I do a duty, and how could I attain salvation? I was plagued by worries over my illness, and even though I was in charge of the gospel work, I didn't want to bother with the details of the problems. I was rarely overseeing details of the work, afraid I'd be incapacitated if I exhausted myself. I was really impatient, and wanted to hand this hectic gospel work over to a newly elected leader. This church already wasn't accomplishing much in the gospel work, and I didn't address the problem in detail, which meant that work didn't pick up at all. I was worried then about whether my condition would get worse, and that if it were to flare up, my life would be lost. If I were to die, I wouldn't be able to do my duty and be saved. But I thought, I was in the middle of doing a duty, so God should protect me, and I probably wouldn't get seriously ill. So, I felt a little more at peace. My concerns still haunted me from time to time, though. Especially when I saw the brother working with me in his 70s without health problems, as I was younger than him and yet riddled with illness, I couldn't help but feel sad: "The brother is in good health and must have an easy time doing his duty. Why am I not healthy?" I felt really helpless and got kind of negative in my duty. In late December 2022, the pandemic flared up. I already had lots of underlying conditions and then I got infected with Covid. I had a fever, felt weak all over, and was coughing up blood. I didn't have any appetite and couldn't eat for two weeks. I was feeling awful at that time. I thought, "I'm done for, my health is truly ruined. If I lose my life, how can I still do a duty? Some people got Covid,

had a cough for a few days and then were fine. But I never stopped doing my duty, and I've had a high fever for several days and haven't been able to eat anything. How can I have gotten so sick?" I felt more down the more I thought about it, and I was miserable. After a while my fever went down, but the two people I worked with got infected, and no one was there to do church work. With no other option, I had to drag my weak body to gatherings. I ran around for two or three days while sick, and it was hard to coordinate a lot of tasks because of the pandemic. My heart started to disengage, and I felt like the work was too hard. My health was getting worse and worse, and I wasn't doing the work well, so I thought I may as well go home and recuperate. Maybe I would get a little bit better. Back at my host's house, my angina suddenly flared up, and I felt like I couldn't take it anymore. I was thinking, "If I keep on doing the duty of a leader, my health won't be able to take it anymore. I'd better not do this duty." I felt really depressed, and stayed in bed for two or three days. I felt that if I wanted to get better, I had to do it myself and take better care of my health, that that was realistic. I wrote a letter to the leader to explain my thinking, and went back home as soon as I sent it. On my way home, I couldn't help but think to myself, "I've been a believer all this time, but my health is in this state and I can't do my duty well. I suppose I've been fully exposed this time; can I still be saved?" When I got home, I lay in bed feeling empty inside, and I couldn't sleep. I was filled with guilt. I also thought about all the details of the gospel work I was responsible for that needed arranging. If I just stayed home, this would certainly delay the church's work. Doing that wasn't in line with God's will. Wasn't I just throwing in the towel and betraying God? So I prayed to God, "God! Why in the face of this situation do I feel so weak and unwilling to do my duty? I know this isn't in line with Your will, but I can't carry on. I don't have an ounce of strength left. Oh

God, I feel so lost, and I'm in so much pain. Please enlighten and guide me, please give me faith and strength."

I read a passage of God's words in my seeking: **"Whether you are sick or in pain, as long as you have a single breath left, as long as you are still living, as long as you can still speak and walk, then you have the energy to perform your duty, and you should be well-behaved in the performance of your duty with your feet planted firmly on the ground. You must not abandon the duty of a created being or the responsibility given to you by the Creator. As long as you are not yet dead, you should fulfill your duty and fulfill it well"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). I also listened to a hymn of God's words **"Man Is So Hard to Save"**: **"No one intends to walk the path of following God their entire life, to pursue the truth to gain life, to achieve knowledge of God, and to ultimately live out a life of meaning like Peter. So, people go astray as they walk, coveting the pleasures of the flesh. When they encounter pain, they will be likely to become negative and weak, and not have a place for God in their hearts. The Holy Spirit will not work in them, and some people will even want to turn back. All the effort they put in their years of belief has gone to waste, and this is a very dangerous thing! What a pity it is that all their suffering, the countless sermons they listened to, and the years they spent following God, have all been in vain! It is easy for people to go downhill, and it is, indeed, difficult to walk the right path, and to choose Peter's path. Most people have unclear thinking. They cannot clearly see which path is the right one and which is a deviation from it. No matter how many sermons they hear, and no matter how many of God's words they read, even though they know that He is God, they still do not fully believe in Him. They know this is the true way, but cannot embark upon it. How**

difficult it is to save people!” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Choosing the Right Path Is the Most Crucial Part of Belief in God). Listening to this hymn brought me to tears. God’s words were really moving for me, and pointed me toward a path of practice. Even though I was sick, so long as I had another breath, and so long as I could still talk and walk, I couldn’t give up on my duty as a created being. Thinking more about my illness, I saw it wasn’t so bad that I couldn’t get around. I was just kind of weak and needed to suffer a bit to do my duty. However, I cast my duty aside and went home. I’d been a believer for years, and had listened to so many of God’s words. Did I really want to give up on my duty? That was unconscionable! I realized I couldn’t keep on being so negative. Wouldn’t it be a mark of shame in God’s eyes if I gave up my duty like that? No matter when I got better, so long as I had breath, no matter how hard my duty was, I had to do all I could to cooperate. God’s words gave me the motivation for my duty, and I suddenly felt much freer. I felt a turnaround in my state, and I went back to take up my duty again.

I read another passage of God’s words after that: **“Then there are those who are in poor health, who have a weak constitution and lack energy, who are often sick with major or minor illnesses, who cannot even do the basic things necessary in daily life, who cannot live or get about like normal people. Such people often feel uncomfortable and unwell while performing their duties; some are physically weak, some have real illnesses, and of course there are some who have known and potential diseases of some kind or other. Because they have such practical physical difficulties, such people often sink into negative emotions and feel distress, anxiety, and worry. What are they feeling distressed, anxious, and worried about? They worry that if they keep performing their duty like this, expending themselves and running**

around for God like this, and always feeling this tired, then will their health deteriorate more and more? When they reach 40 or 50, will they be confined to their beds? Do these worries hold up? Will anyone provide a concrete way of dealing with this? Who will take responsibility for this? Who will be answerable? People with poor health and who are physically unfit feel distressed, anxious, and worried about such things. People with an illness will often think, 'Oh, I'm determined to perform my duty well, but I've got this illness. I ask God to keep me from harm, and with God's protection I need not be afraid. But if I get exhausted when performing my duties, will my condition flare up? What will I do if my condition really flares up? If I need to be admitted to hospital to undergo an operation, I have no money to pay for it, so if I don't borrow the money to pay for my treatment, will my condition get even worse? And if it gets really bad, will I die? Could such a death be considered a normal death? If I really do die, will God remember the duties I've performed? Will I be considered to have done good deeds? Will I attain salvation?' There are also some who know they are sick, that is, they know they have some real illness or other, for example stomach diseases, lower back and leg pain, arthritis, rheumatism, as well as skin diseases, gynecological diseases, liver disease, hypertension, heart disease, and so on. They think, 'If I keep performing my duty, will God's house pay for treatment for my illness? If my illness gets worse and it affects the performance of my duty, will God heal me? Other people have been cured after believing in God, so will I be cured too? Will God cure me, just as He shows kindness to others? If I loyally perform my duty, God should heal me, but if only I wish God to heal me and He doesn't, then what am I going to do?' Whenever they think of these things, they get a

profound feeling of anxiety rising up in their hearts. Even though they never stop performing their duty and they always do what they're supposed to, they think constantly about their illness, their health, their future, and about their life and death. Finally, they reach the conclusion of wishfully thinking, 'God will heal me, God will keep me safe. God won't abandon me, and God won't stand by and do nothing if He sees me getting sick.' There is no basis at all for such thoughts, and they can even be said to be a kind of notion. People will never be able to resolve their practical difficulties with such notions and imaginings as these, and in their innermost hearts, they feel vaguely distressed, anxious, and worried about their health and their illnesses; they have no idea who will take responsibility for these things, or whether anyone will take responsibility for them at all" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth

I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). Without God saying this, I'd still not know that constantly worrying about my illnesses was a negative emotion, and I would think it was justified. Now I finally realized that I was deeply entrenched in this negative emotion. Since I had the underlying conditions of high blood pressure and angina, I had symptoms flaring up pretty frequently. When I suffered more in my duty and I got a little more fatigued, I was worried that my condition would get more and more serious. If I lost my life, how would I be able to do my duty? Therefore, I was afraid I'd lose my chance at salvation. When my health wasn't that bad, I could keep on doing my duty. I felt like I was paying a price and that God would protect me, but as soon as my symptoms emerged, I was flooded with all these emotions of distress. I constantly worried about my future, and I couldn't do my duty freely. The more I thought about the flesh, the more I feared death and the difficulty and pain brought on by poor health. And when I thought back on my dad lying in bed, riddled with horrible pain

every day, helplessly staring at a white wall, without any hope in life, I was terrified of becoming like him. That's why I was always thinking of my flesh while doing my duty. I was cowering, afraid to put my all in. I didn't want to work hard to learn the details of the gospel work, which meant that work never progressed well. And after I came down with Covid and my condition got worse, my worries got more serious. I didn't want to do my duty anymore, and I just gave up and ran home. I saw how much that negative emotion had impacted me. Living within that anxiety, I just rebelled against God more and more, and life became more and more depressing and painful. Really, I knew that birth, aging, illness, and death are all in God's hands, out of my control, and that there's no way for me to avoid illness. I should face it properly and submit to God's arrangements. No matter how much I worry, I can't change anything. But since I was always thinking about my prospects and a way out, I couldn't help but live in a state of anxiety. I was causing myself a lot of unnecessary strain and pain. I was so foolish! Realizing this, I didn't want to live in that negative state anymore.

After that, I read a passage of God's words: **"When sickness comes calling, what path should people follow? How should they choose? People should not sink into distress, anxiety, and worry, and contemplate their own future prospects and paths. Rather, the more people find themselves in times like these and in such special situations and contexts, and the more they find themselves in such immediate difficulties, the more they should seek the truth and pursue the truth. Only by doing this will the sermons you have heard in the past and the truths you have understood not be in vain and will take effect. The more you find yourself in such difficulties as these, the more you should relinquish your own desires and submit to God's orchestrations. God's**

purpose in setting up this kind of situation and arranging these conditions for you is not to make you sink into the emotions of distress, anxiety, and worry, and it is not so that you can test God to see if He will cure you when sickness befalls, or sound out the truth of the matter; God sets up these special situations and conditions for you so that you can learn the practical lessons in such situations and conditions, to attain deeper entry into the truth and into submission to God, and so that you know more clearly and accurately how God orchestrates all people, events, and things. The fates of man are in God's hands and, whether people can sense it or not, whether they are truly aware of it or not, they should obey and not resist, not reject, and certainly not test God. You may die in any case, and if you resist, reject, and test God, then it goes without saying what your end will be. Conversely, if in the same situations and conditions you are able to seek how a created being ought to submit to the Creator's orchestrations, seek what lessons you are to learn and what corrupt dispositions you are to know in the situations God brings about for you, and understand God's will in such situations, and bear your testimony well to meet God's demands, then this is what you should do. When God arranges for someone to get an illness, whether major or minor, His purpose in doing so is not to make you appreciate the ins and outs of being sick, the harm the illness does to you, the hardships and difficulties the illness causes you, and all the myriad feelings the illness causes you to feel—His purpose is not for you to appreciate sickness through being sick. Rather, His purpose is for you to learn the lessons from sickness, to learn how to feel for God's will, to know the corrupt dispositions you reveal and the wrong attitudes you adopt toward God when you're sick, and to learn how to submit to God's sovereignty and

arrangements, so that you can achieve true obedience to God and be able to stand firm in your testimony—this is absolutely key. God wishes to save you and cleanse you through sickness. What about you does He wish to cleanse? He wishes to cleanse all your extravagant desires and demands toward God, and even cleanse the various plans, judgments, and schemes you make at all costs to survive and live. God does not ask you to make plans, He does not ask you to judge, and He does not allow you to have any extravagant desires toward Him; He requires only that you submit to Him and, in your practice of experiencing and submitting, to know your own attitude toward sickness, and to know your attitude toward these bodily conditions He gives to you, as well as your own personal wishes. When you come to know these things, you can then appreciate how beneficial it is for you that God has arranged the circumstances of the illness for you or that He has given you these bodily conditions; and you can appreciate just how helpful they are to changing your disposition, to you attaining salvation, and to your life entry. That is why, when illness comes calling, you must not always be wondering how you can escape it or flee from it or reject it” (The Word, Vol.

6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). I understood God’s will after I read His words. When illness strikes, I shouldn’t get stuck in a negative emotion of anxiety, and I shouldn’t test if God will cure me. Instead, I should learn to submit to God’s arrangements in the environment He sets up. Getting sick doesn’t mean God is intentionally making things hard for me. He wants me to seek the truth and understand what lessons I should learn. Thinking back on when I became ill and experienced some physical pain, I was worried about the road ahead for me and my future, afraid I would die and be unable to attain salvation. I felt like God had set up that situation to cast me out. That was my greatest misunderstanding of God.

But really, that was not God's will at all. He set up that situation to give me a practical experience of illness, to expose my internal corruption and deficiencies, and to show me that although I claimed to believe in God, in my heart, I didn't believe that He rules everything. It also allowed me to see that when I got sick, my own flesh was my only consideration. I knew someone was urgently needed for church work, but I still refused my duty. Though later I reluctantly accepted it, I wasn't wholeheartedly paying a price for it. When I got Covid and my condition worsened, I argued with God and resisted Him. In the end I abandoned my duty and betrayed God, causing losses to the work of the church. I saw that as a believer all this time, I hadn't had a shred of fear of God, and that I had a very casual attitude toward my duty. I finally realized that even if I were physically healthy, without resolving all those corrupt dispositions in me, I would keep resisting and betraying God, and I wouldn't gain His approval. God permitted my illness to purify the adulterations in my faith and to transform my satanic disposition. But I never gave thought to God's earnest intentions. I was always immersed in anxiety and concern about my illnesses, and was resistant to God setting up this situation, always thinking of my own plans and arrangements. I even thought that God wanted to cast me out. I really truly was rebellious and lacking in humanity and reason. I couldn't keep approaching my illnesses with that kind of attitude. I needed to correct my attitude, reflect on and recognize my corrupt dispositions, and pursue the truth during these illnesses. That was what I should have done.

I reflected on myself after that. What was the root of my constant anxiety after I got sick? I read this in God's words: **"So many believe in Me only that I might heal them. So many believe in Me only that I might use My powers to drive unclean spirits out from their bodies, and so many believe in Me simply that they might receive peace and joy**

from Me. ... When I gave unto man the suffering of hell and reclaimed the blessings of heaven, man's shame turned into anger. When man asked Me to heal him, I paid him no heed and felt abhorrence toward him; man departed from Me to instead seek the way of evil medicine and sorcery. When I took away all that man had demanded from Me, everyone disappeared without a trace. Thus, I say that man has faith in Me because I give too much grace, and there is far too much to gain"

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?). God exposed my state. Wasn't my view on faith exactly what He described? My faith was just for blessings, and I was trying to make a deal with God. When I didn't have any major health problems in my duties, I thought I'd gained God's care and protection, and had a chance at salvation, so I was willing to suffer and pay a price for my duty. When I became ill and didn't see my symptoms easing up, I couldn't throw myself into my duty, and I didn't put my heart into the gospel work, either. I only thought of my future and fate. I was worried about whether I'd die, and whether I could be blessed. When I was seriously ill with Covid and was unwell for two weeks, I complained that God wasn't protecting me, and I didn't even want to do my duty anymore. When I saw that my hopes for blessings were dashed, my true nature was exposed. I turned my back on God, abandoning my duty and betraying Him. I went completely against God, rebelling against Him and resisting Him. Arguing with God, being negative and resistant—where was my sense of humanity and reason? Thinking about it, I was truly grateful to God for setting up that situation for me. Although I suffered a bit in the flesh, I gained some understanding of the adulterations in my faith and my satanic disposition of going against God. I felt in my heart that everything God does in me is for salvation, and it's all love.

I read more of God's words later and gained more insight into the matter of death. God's words say: **"Whether you encounter a major illness or a minor one, the moment your illness gets serious or you're facing death, just remember one thing: Do not fear death. Even if you're in the final stages of cancer, even if the death rate for your particular illness is very high, do not fear death. Regardless of how great your suffering is, if you fear death then you will not submit. ... If your illness gets so serious that you may die, and the death rate for it is high regardless of how old the person is who contracts the illness, and the time from when people contract the illness to when they die is very short, what should you think in your heart? 'I must not fear death, everyone dies in the end. Submitting to God, however, is something most people can't do, and I can use this illness to practice submitting to God. I should have the thinking and the attitude of submitting to God's orchestrations and arrangements, and I must not fear death.'** Dying is easy, much easier than living. You can be in extreme pain and you won't be aware of it, and as soon as your eyes close, your breath ceases, your soul leaves the body, and your life ends. This is how death goes; it is this simple. Not fearing death is one attitude to adopt. Besides this, you mustn't worry about whether your illness will get worse or not, or whether you will die if you cannot be cured, or how long it will be until you die, or what pain you will be in when it comes time to die. You mustn't worry about these things; these are not things you should be worrying about. This is because the day must come, and it must come in some year, some month, and on some particular day. You cannot hide from it and you cannot escape it—it is your fate. Your so-called fate has been predestined by God and already arranged by Him. The span of your years and the age and time at which you die are already

set by God, so what are you worried about? You can worry about it but that won't change anything; you can worry about it, but you cannot prevent it from happening; you can worry about it, but you cannot stop that day from arriving. Therefore, your worry is superfluous, and all it does is make the burden of your illness even heavier" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). After reading God's words, it was clear to me that everyone's deaths are ordained by God, and no amount of worrying is of any use. Whenever I experienced symptoms or felt uncomfortable, I was worried that if those symptoms got worse, I might lose my life. I didn't understand that everyone's time of death has long since been determined by God, and that it's not caused by being worn out from our duties. I thought of how when my aunt was young, she was weak and riddled with illness, always in and out of the hospital. We all thought she wasn't long for this world. But surprisingly, now that she's older, her health has gotten better and better. She's over 80 and still able to take care of herself. But her husband, who was always healthy and hardly ever got sick, unexpectedly developed liver cancer and passed away. These real-life examples showed me that our life and death are within God's rule and arrangements. I had quite a few illnesses. Whether my condition would get worse, whether I'd die—this couldn't be solved by worrying over it. It's all up to God's rule. Whether we die has nothing to do with being exhausted by our duties. Some people don't do a duty and look after their health, but their death will still come. I was a believer who didn't believe in God's rule, always living within the anxiety of the fear of death. I didn't have genuine faith in God. The truth is, everyone dies. It's a law of nature. Death isn't something to fear. Our life and death are preordained by God, and I should submit to what God arranges. No matter when death comes for me, I should face it calmly. I have to be devoted to my duty and put my all into it, and

strive to leave no regrets at the time of my death, which is the only way to be content and at peace. If I'm constantly living in a negative emotion of anxiety, always making plans for my flesh, not genuinely putting my all into my duty, I'll be left with regrets and guilt, and I'll be holding up the church's work, and no matter how good my health is, my life will be meaningless, and I'll inevitably end up punished by God. Once I understood all that, I felt a lot freer.

Later on, I read a passage of God's words that really touched me. Almighty God says: **"What is the value of a person's life? Is it merely for the sake of indulging in fleshly pleasures such as eating, drinking, and being entertained? (No, it is not.) Then what is it? Please share your thoughts. (To fulfill the duty of a created being, this at least is what a person should achieve in their life.) That is correct. ... During your lifetime, you must fulfill your mission; this is the most important. We're not talking about completing a great mission, duty, or responsibility; but at the very least, you should accomplish something. For instance, in the church, some people put all their efforts into the work of spreading the gospel, dedicating the energy of their entire lives, paying a great price, and gaining many people. Because of this, they feel that their lives have not been lived in vain, and that they hold value and comfort. When facing illness or death, when summing up their entire lives and thinking back on everything they ever did, on the path they walked, they find solace in their hearts. They experience no accusations or regrets. Some people spare no effort while leading in the church or being responsible for a certain aspect of work. They unleash their maximum potential, giving all of their strength, expending all their energy and paying the price for the work they do. Through their watering, leadership, help, and support, they help many people in the**

midst of their own weaknesses and negativity to become strong and stand firm, not to withdraw themselves, but instead to return to the presence of God and even finally bear witness to Him. Furthermore, during the period of their leadership, they accomplish many significant tasks, clearing out more than a few evil people, protecting many of God's chosen people, and recovering a number of significant losses. All of these achievements take place during their leadership. Looking back at the path they walked, recalling the work they did and the price they paid over the years, they feel no regrets or accusations. They believe that they did nothing to merit remorse, and they live with a sense of value, and steadiness and comfort in their hearts. How wonderful is that! Isn't this the result? (Yes.) This sense of steadiness and comfort, this lack of regrets, they are the result and the reward of pursuing positive things and the truth. Let's not set high standards for people. Let's consider a situation where a person is faced with a task they should do or want to do in their lifetime. After finding their place, they stand firmly in their position, holding their position, taking great pains, paying the price, and devoting all their energy to accomplish and finish what they should work on and complete. When they finally stand before God to give an account, they feel relatively satisfied, without accusations or regrets in their heart. They have a sense of comfort and of reward, that they have lived a valuable life. Isn't this a significant goal? Regardless of its scale, tell Me, is it practical? (It is practical.) Is it specific? It's specific enough, practical enough, and realistic enough. So, in order to live a valuable life and ultimately achieve this kind of reward, do you think it's worth it for a person's physical body to suffer a bit and pay a bit of a price, even if they experience exhaustion and physical illness? (It is worth it.) When a person comes into this world, it

isn't just for the enjoyment of the flesh, nor is it solely for eating, drinking, and having fun. One shouldn't live just for those things; that is not the value of human life, nor is it the right path. The value of human life and the right path to follow involve accomplishing something valuable and completing one or multiple jobs of value. This is not called a career; it is called the right path, it is also called the proper task. Tell Me, is it worth it for a person to pay the price in order to complete some work of value, live a meaningful and valuable life, and pursue and attain the truth? If you truly desire to pursue and understand the truth, to embark on the right path in life, to fulfill your duty well, and to live a valuable and meaningful life, then you should not hesitate to give all of your energy, pay the price, and give all of your time and the extent of your days. If you experience a bit of illness during this period it will not matter, it will not crush you. Isn't this far superior to a lifetime of ease and idleness, nurturing the physical body to the point that it is well-fed and healthy, and ultimately achieving longevity? (Yes.) Which one of these two options is more conducive to a valuable life? Which one can bring comfort and no regrets to people when they face death at the very end? (Living a meaningful life.) Living a meaningful life means to feel results and comfort in your heart. What about those who are well-fed, and maintain a rosy complexion until death? They don't pursue a meaningful life, so how do they feel when they die? (Like they lived in vain.) These three words are incisive—living in vain. What does 'living in vain' mean? (To waste one's life.) Living in vain, wasting one's life—what is the basis for these two phrases? (At the end of their lives they find that they have gained nothing.) What should a person gain then? (They should gain the truth or accomplish valuable and meaningful things in this life. They should fulfill

their duty as a created being. If they fail to do all that and only live for their physical bodies, they will feel that their life was lived in vain and wasted.)” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (6)). Reading this in God’s words, I understood the meaning of human life. I thought of how I now have the chance to do the duty of a created being, and that it’s the most righteous thing to do. Unbelievers pursue food, drink, and pleasure, and though they have the pleasures of the flesh and don’t suffer much, when death comes to them, they have no idea what people live their lives for. It’s a life lived in vain. I can be uplifted by God and serve as a leader in my duty during my lifetime, so I should put my all into it and take responsibility for the church’s projects as the Above requires, lead brothers and sisters to pursue the truth and do their duties according to principles, and do my part to expand the kingdom gospel—this is the most meaningful thing. But, if people just live their lives for the flesh, they are wasting their days, and it’s all totally meaningless. Just like before, when I gave up my duty and went home so I wouldn’t collapse, though I was at home and wasn’t physically suffering and I didn’t have to worry so much about church work, I wasn’t shouldering the responsibilities I should have, and I felt empty inside. I was also filled with guilt, and I didn’t have any real peace or joy. I saw that a life lived for the flesh was totally meaningless and that it was empty, no matter how well I took care of my health. Although I was a little tired and suffered a bit doing my duty, I could gain the truth and feel calm and at peace. That’s the only meaningful life. Through this I also gained personal experience of how doing the duty of a created being is the only way for us to live fulfilled, meaningful lives, and for us to have true peace and joy in our hearts. Treasuring the flesh only leads to an empty life, and ruins one’s chance to pursue the truth and be saved. Once I understood these things, I regained my motivation to do my duty. I wasn’t achieving

anything in gospel work, so I needed to gain a practical understanding of the situation, seek the principles to resolve problems, do my best to do everything I could, striving to improve the results of the work. That way I'd have no shame or regrets in how I did my duty. When I was engaged in the gospel work and encountered difficulties, sometimes I'd worry about wearing myself out or getting worse from resolving problems, but I felt I couldn't keep living in a state of anxiety. So I prayed to God, "Oh God, whether my illnesses worsen or not, I don't want to keep rebelling against You like before. Whether I live or die is entirely in Your hands, and I want to submit to Your orchestrations and arrangements." I didn't feel as worried after praying. I fellowshipped with some brothers and sisters to resolve the issues in the gospel work. Everyone sought the principles together, discussed options, and we found a path for our duties. There was progress in the gospel work, and we became clearer on some of the principles.

In March 2023, the church held elections for upper leaders, and in the end, I was elected. I knew that I'd have a greater burden in this duty and I still thought of my health, but I didn't want to heed the flesh anymore. I wanted to really treasure the opportunity of this duty. Afterward, in doing my duty I could make adjustments for my health as needed, resting a bit when I wasn't feeling well, and making time to get some exercise. Doing my duty that way, I didn't get overly tired, and I wasn't held back by illness. Over time, I didn't have so much numbness in my head. Now I think that I must treasure the time I have left, and that what's most important is how to do my duty well. I'm grateful to God for setting up this situation so I could learn a lesson. I'm not constantly worried about getting sick anymore.

8. Practice the Truth Even If It Offends

By April, the Philippines

In May 2020, I accepted the work of Almighty God in the last days. I sought enthusiastically and actively carried out my duties. Ten months later, I was chosen as a church leader. At that time I was under a lot of pressure. I felt that I was still young and that my understanding of the truth was shallow, and so I was afraid that I would not be up to this duty. So I prayed to God. Later, I thought back on a passage of God's word: **"You must believe that everything is in God's hands, and that people are just cooperating. If you are sincere, God will see, and He will open up a way out for you in every situation. No difficulty is insurmountable; you must have this faith. Therefore, when you fulfill your duties, there is no need to have any misgivings. As long as you give it your all, with all your heart, God will not give you difficulties, nor will He give you more than you can handle"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Believing in God, What Is Most Important Is to Practice and Experience His Words). The word of God gave me faith and I understood that God sees people's hearts. So long as I truly gave consideration to the will of God and tried my best, then God would lead me. Knowing this, I no longer felt constrained and began to throw myself into my duty.

Later, the church urgently needed to train two gospel deacons. I found that Brother Kevin's caliber was good, he was quite active in gatherings and grasped the principles of spreading the gospel. There was also Sister Janelle, who was active in her duties and produced some results. Compared to others, these two seemed right for this duty, and my leader agreed with me. So, I made them both gospel deacons. After a while, they became familiar with the role, so I allowed them to perform their duties

independently and I put all of my energy into watering work. After a few weeks, I found out that some who had just received the gospel left the gathering group, and some who spread the gospel had difficulties in their duties that they couldn't resolve. As I saw all these problems in gospel work, I started to wonder, "Are these two gospel deacons doing practical work?" So, I went to investigate their work in detail. I found that they only arranged things, but didn't do the work themselves, that they didn't do follow-up work, and that at gatherings they didn't resolve practical problems, they merely reminded and urged other brothers and sisters to do their duty properly. This was leading to brothers' and sisters' problems going unresolved. After learning of these circumstances, I was very disappointed. I thought to myself: "As church deacons, isn't it neglectful for them to not resolve practical problems?" I also found out that Brother Kevin wasn't doing a proper job, and was playing games, while Sister Janelle had been rather lazy and irresponsible in her duties during this time. I initially wanted to fellowship with them and point out the problems in their duties, but because we had always gotten along so well, I was afraid that this would spoil our relationship. If I pointed out their problems, what would they think of me? Would they say that I didn't see their efforts, that I was only focusing on their deficiencies, and that I lacked a loving heart? I hoped that the brothers and sisters saw me as a good person, someone understanding and considerate. I didn't want to ruin my reputation because of this incident. If the two deacons couldn't accept it and became negative and unwilling to perform their duties, would my brothers and sisters think I was incapable of the work of a leader? That I was a bad leader? If my leader knew about this, I might be dealt with. But I thought that since I was in charge of church work, it was my responsibility to point out their problems so they could reflect and gain some knowledge. I was conflicted,

but in the end, I still couldn't say it. Instead, I sent them some of God's words of encouragement and comfort and gently fellowshiped with them on how to perform one's duty well. Afterward, I felt very guilty. I felt dishonest and deceitful.

One night, I couldn't sleep as I kept thinking, "The ineffectiveness of the gospel work is directly related to me. I saw two gospel deacons being irresponsible in their duties, who were not solving practical problems, and who were causing brothers and sisters to be ineffective in their duties. Some brothers and sisters fell into a negative state, and some newcomers left the gathering group, but I didn't point out these two deacons' problems." I felt so much guilt in my heart and I didn't know what to do, so I sincerely prayed to God, seeking His enlightenment and asking for Him to lead me to resolve this problem. After I prayed, I watched a video of experiential testimony, which contained some words of God that inspired me a lot. Almighty God says: **"Conscience and reason should both be components of a person's humanity. These are both the most fundamental and most important. What kind of person is one who lacks conscience and does not have the reason of normal humanity? Generally speaking, they are a person who lacks humanity, a person of extremely poor humanity. Going into more detail, what manifestations of lost humanity does this person exhibit? Have a go at analyzing what characteristics are found in such people and what specific manifestations they present. (They are selfish and mean.) Selfish and mean people are perfunctory in their actions and stand aloof from anything that does not concern them personally. They do not consider the interests of God's house, nor do they show consideration for God's will. They take on no burden of performing their duties or testifying for God, and they have no sense of responsibility. ... There are some people who do not take any**

responsibility regardless of the duty they are performing. They don't promptly report problems they discover to their superiors, either. When they see people being disruptive and disturbing, they turn a blind eye. When they see wicked people committing evil, they don't try to stop them. They don't protect the interests of the house of God, or consider what their duty and responsibility is. When they perform their duty, people like this don't do any real work; they are people-pleasers who are greedy for comfort; they speak and act only for their own vanity, face, status, and interests, and are only willing to devote their time and effort to things that benefit them" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One's Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). I read God's words and I felt very sad. Before, I had always thought I had good humanity, that I had patiently helped my brothers and sisters, and that when I acted, I always considered the feelings of others and didn't want to hurt them. I thought that I was being considerate of God's will, and that I was a good person. But when I saw the two deacons being irresponsible in their duties and delaying church work, I didn't safeguard the interests of the church, and I didn't point out their problems. Instead, I indulged them because I feared pointing out their problems would destroy our relationship. I also worried my leader would criticize me if I made them negative and that my brothers and sisters would view me badly. For the sake of my image, status, and personal interests, I preferred to delay the work of the church. This was not at all being considerate of God's will, and I was not a good person. In fact, people with good humanity are honest people, are able to practice the truth and protect the interests of the church, and when they see the problems of others they have the courage to fellowship and expose others, helping them change. They treat their brothers and sisters with a sincere heart. But when I saw the problems with the deacons, I didn't say

anything or point them out, and preferred to let the church's work suffer to safeguard my own interests. I had such bad humanity. I felt ashamed at my lack of conscience and normal humanity.

Later, I read a passage of God's words and gained more understanding of myself. Almighty God says: **"Some church leaders, upon seeing their brothers or sisters performing their duties carelessly and perfunctorily, do not rebuke them, though they should. When they see something that is clearly detrimental to the interests of God's house, they turn a blind eye and make no inquiries, so as not to cause the least offense to others. In fact, they are not really showing consideration for people's weaknesses; instead, their intention is to win people over. They are fully aware of this, thinking: 'If I keep this up and don't cause offense to anyone, they'll think I'm a good leader. They'll have a good, high opinion of me. They'll give me recognition and like me.'**

people are, merely preaching some words and doctrines, making a few perfunctory exhortations, trying to avoid conflict. As a result, God's chosen ones do not reflect on and try to know themselves, they gain no resolution to the revelation of their corrupt dispositions, and live amid words, doctrines, notions and imaginings, without any life entry. They even believe in their hearts that, 'Our leader has even more understanding for our weaknesses than God does. Our stature may be too small to live up to God's requirements, but we need only fulfill the requirements of our leader; by obeying our leader, we are obeying God. If a day comes when the Above replaces our leader, then we will make ourselves heard; to keep our leader and stop him being replaced by the Above, we will negotiate with the Above and force them into agreeing to our demands. This is how we will do right by our leader.' When people have such thoughts in their hearts, when they have such a relationship with the leader, and in their hearts, they feel dependence, admiration, and veneration toward their leader, then they will come to have ever greater faith in this leader, it is the leader's words they want to hear, and they stop searching for the truth in God's words. Such a leader has almost taken the place of God in people's hearts. If a leader is willing to maintain such a relationship with God's chosen people, if they derive a feeling of enjoyment from it in their heart, and believes that God's chosen ones ought to treat them like this, then there is no difference between them and Paul, and they have already set foot on the path of the antichrists. God's chosen people have already been deceived by antichrists and they have no discernment. ... The antichrists do not do real work, they do not fellowship the truth and solve problems, they do not guide people in eating and drinking God's words and entering the truth reality. They work only for status and

renown, they care only about establishing themselves, protecting the place they hold in people's hearts, and making everyone worship them, venerate them, and follow them; these are the aims they want to achieve. This is how the antichrists try to win people over and control God's chosen ones. Is such a way of working not evil? It is abhorrent!"

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item One: They Try to Win People Over). After reading this passage of God's words, I felt a deep flush of embarrassment, because God's words had precisely revealed my state. I clearly saw that the two deacons were not doing actual work, and that the problem was serious. I should have used God's words that judge and reveal people's corrupt dispositions to fellowship, so they could know their problems and change their attitudes toward their duty in good time, averting continued delays to church work. But to give them a good impression of me, and for them to say that I was a good leader, I didn't expose the essence of their problems, I just used God's comforting words to encourage them, meaning that their problems were not resolved in a timely manner. This affected the work of the church and even led to some of those who had just received the gospel leaving the gathering group. I realized that I was the main cause of this. A leader's duty is to supervise and follow up on the work of church deacons and group leaders, and to resolve problems in time. We need to know the situations of our brothers and sisters, and when we discover that someone does things in their duty that violate principles or affect the church's work, we should lovingly fellowship and help them. If our repeated fellowship still doesn't change things, we should prune, deal with, or dismiss them. This is the only way to protect the work of the church. As a church leader, I had not been responsible at all in my duty, and I had not acted as a leader. How was I any different to those false leaders who didn't do any real work? I was ashamed and sad. If I had fellowshipped and exposed their problems, I

wouldn't have caused these losses to the work of the church. These current problems had come about because of my neglect. I didn't help my brothers and sisters understand the truth and couldn't bring them before God. I had always just wanted them to approve of me and safeguard me, so that they would have a good image of me in their hearts and so that I would have status. I was walking the antichrist's path of resisting God. Without the judgment and chastisement of God's word, I don't know what other evils I might have committed as well.

Once I recognized this, I regretted my actions, so I sincerely prayed to God: "God, I didn't realize that my selfishness would bring such damage to the work of the church and endanger the lives of my brothers and sisters. I am unworthy of such an important work. God, I wish to repent, please guide me in reflecting to know myself. I don't want to make the same mistakes again." After praying, my state improved a little, but I still felt very guilty. I felt like a sinner, like everything I did represented Satan, that I couldn't be saved, and that there was no hope for me. At this time, a sister sent a passage of God's words in the group chat. God's word says: **"Your many experiences of failure, of weakness, your times of negativity, can all be said to be God's trials. This is because everything comes from God, and all things and events are in His hands. Whether you fail or whether you are weak and you stumble, it all rests on God and is within His grasp. From God's perspective, this is a trial of you, and if you cannot recognize that, it will become temptation. There are two kinds of states that people should recognize: One comes from the Holy Spirit, and the likely source of the other is Satan. One is a state in which the Holy Spirit illuminates you and allows you to know yourself, to detest and feel regret about yourself and to be able to have genuine love for God, to set your heart on satisfying Him. The other is a state in which**

you know yourself, but you are negative and weak. It could be said that this state is God's refinement, and also that it is Satan's temptation. If you recognize that this is God's salvation of you and if you feel that you are now deeply in His debt, and if from now on you try to repay Him and no longer fall into such depravity, if you put your effort into eating and drinking His words, and if you always consider yourself to be lacking, and have a heart of longing, then this is God's trial. After the suffering has ended and you are once again moving forward, God will still lead, illuminate, enlighten, and nourish you. But if you do not recognize it and you are negative, simply abandoning yourself to despair, if you think in this way, then Satan's temptation will have come upon you" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). After reading this passage of God's words, I felt comforted, and I also had a path to practice. When I read the harsh words of God before, in which my corrupt disposition was revealed, I felt as if I had been condemned and had no hope of being saved, so I was negative and weak. But when I read this passage of God's words, I understood God's will. If people don't defend the interests of the church in their duties and are exposed and dealt with, it is normal for them to feel negative and weak. If I could seek truth in my failure and reflect on myself, this was my chance to learn a lesson. But if I became negative, withdrew, gave in to despair, or gave up on myself, I would be falling for Satan's trick and succumbing to temptation. God's words of judgment and revelation is to cleanse and save people. God wanted me to know myself, learn from my failures, and not to be controlled by satanic dispositions. This was a good thing, this was an opportunity for my life to grow. Recognizing this, I no longer felt negative or misunderstood God. I was willing to do my duty according to God's

word and principles. I would no longer guard my name, reputation, and status.

Later, I read some of God's words: **"You ought to know that God likes those who are honest. In essence, God is faithful, and so His words can always be trusted; His actions, furthermore, are faultless and unquestionable, which is why God likes those who are absolutely honest with Him. Honesty means giving your heart to God, being genuine with God in all things, being open with Him in all things, never hiding the facts, not trying to deceive those above and below you, and not doing things only to curry favor with God. In short, to be honest is to be pure in your actions and words, and to deceive neither God nor man"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). **"Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; do not consider the interests of man, and give no thought to your own pride, reputation, and status. You must first consider the interests of God's house, and make them your priority. You should be considerate of God's will and begin by contemplating whether or not there have been impurities in the performance of your duty, whether you have been devoted, fulfilled your responsibilities, and given it your all, as well as whether or not you have been wholeheartedly thinking about your duty and the work of the church. You must consider these things"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). From God's word, I understood that God hates the deceitful but loves honest people. Honest people are able to protect the interests of the church, take responsibility for the lives of their brothers and sisters, and perform their duties well. I had to cast aside my pride and status, put the interests of the church first, and practice the truth in fellowshiping and exposing the two deacons, to let

them realize the seriousness of their problems, genuinely repent, and start acting responsibly again. If they still couldn't change after my fellowship, I had the responsibility to dismiss them and protect the work of the church.

Later, I found some of God's words and fellowshiped with Brother Kevin first, to let him know that evil social trends are temptations from Satan and that he should let go of his carnal inclinations and throw himself into his duty, that only this would conform to the will of God. Then, I fellowshiped with Sister Janelle and pointed out her lack of urgency and responsibility in her duties, and told her to be considerate of God's will. After my fellowship, they were both willing to change their attitudes toward their duty. Later, Brother Kevin made some changes; when he was tempted again, he could consciously forsake his own flesh. Sister Janelle was also able to be more proactive in her duty. When I saw this result, I blamed myself for not pointing out their problems sooner. I also saw that the word of God does not make people negative and that people who can accept the truth are able to know themselves, truly repent and perform their duty better. I am very happy to have had this experience. The enlightenment and guidance of God's words gave me some understanding of my own corruption. I also experienced that the words expressed by Almighty God are the truth, and they can really change and save people. Thanks be to Almighty God!

9. Learning to Submit Through My Duty

By Novo, the Philippines

In 2012, when I was working in Taiwan, I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. Later, I learned I was one of the first people from the Philippines to accept it. I was very excited, and I felt I had been blessed. In 2014, after returning to the Philippines, I started preaching Almighty God's kingdom gospel in my country. Soon after, many Filipinos accepted God's work of the last days. I was thrilled, and was proud that I could preach the gospel. My brothers and sisters envied me for fulfilling such an important duty, and for being among the first in the Philippines to accept God's work. They all said I was very fortunate. When I saw how they envied and looked up to me, I always felt a sense of superiority, and I felt I deserved such an important duty.

One day, the church leader told me that the brother in charge of the church's general affairs had something to attend to, and asked if I could temporarily take over that brother's duty. I was really upset, and thought, "Why does my leader suddenly want me to see to general affairs? What will my brothers and sisters think of me if they find out?" In my mind, only preaching the gospel and testifying to God was an important duty, one that could bring many people who yearn for God's appearance before Him. General affairs were basically chores that couldn't testify to God at all or make others look up to me. I was very disappointed. I couldn't understand how this was happening to me, and I was worried that my leader would make me continue doing that. I had a lot of negative thoughts, I couldn't submit to it, and I didn't even want my brothers and sisters to know my duties had changed.

The next day, some brothers and sisters told me they had heard I was doing some general church affairs. Hearing them say this made me feel very ashamed and depressed. I didn't want this job at all. I felt aggrieved and disobedient, but on the surface I pretended not to mind. I didn't want them to see my weakness and look down on me, so I answered them by saying, "These are God's arrangements, and I am grateful to Him for them." Only after I said that did I realize that, although I knew the phrase "God has sovereignty over all things," when the actual situation came, in my heart I didn't admit His sovereignty. My words didn't match how I felt. I appeared obedient, but I didn't actually want to accept this at all. I couldn't help but think, "Did the leader make a mistake in arranging for me to handle general affairs? This job isn't right for me at all. I should be preaching the gospel, how can I do this duty?" I became increasingly negative. I supposed it must have been because he felt I was unsuitable to preach the gospel that he made me do this duty. I felt handling general affairs didn't require life entry or seeking truth principles, and was only physical labor, so I simply saw to affairs as I was told. After some time passed, I gained no life entry, I grew tired of it, and eventually I didn't want to do this job anymore.

One day, a brother who I had previously preached the gospel with called me and asked, "Brother, there's some place we'd like to go, can you drive us there?" Hearing that made me feel sad and embarrassed. I thought, "Maybe this brother thinks I just handle general affairs, that I'm just here doing grunt work or errand work, and that I have no status. He definitely looks down on me." I felt really miserable and negative, and was even more unmotivated in my duties. During that time, while I appeared to be fulfilling my duty, I was a total mess inside, and would often wonder what my brothers and sisters thought of me. I didn't even want to read God's word or attend gatherings. Theoretically I knew that no matter what happened I

should fulfill my duties as a created being, yet I couldn't escape my negative and passive state. Eventually, I no longer felt the work of the Holy Spirit, and my duty seemed like a worldly job. Each day I just bustled about, waiting for the day to pass. My heart was full of darkness and misery, I had no enlightenment of the Holy Spirit in gatherings, and I always felt empty. I prayed to God, "God, I know my state is wrong, but I still care about what my brothers and sisters think of me. Please enlighten and lead me so that I can reflect on my corruption and accept this duty."

Later, I read some of God's words: **"In measuring whether or not people can obey God, the key is whether or not they have any extravagant desires or ulterior motives toward Him. If people are always making demands of God, it proves that they are not obedient to Him. No matter what happens to you, if you do not accept it from God, and you do not seek the truth, and you are always arguing for yourself and always feeling that only you are right, and if you are even capable of doubting that God is the truth and righteousness, then you will be in trouble. Such people are the most arrogant and rebellious to God. People who always make demands of God cannot truly obey Him. If you make demands of God, this proves that you are trying to make a deal with God, that you are choosing your own will, and acting according to it. In this, you are betraying God, and you lack obedience. ... If there is no true faith within a person, and no substantial belief, they can never obtain God's praise. When people are able to make fewer demands of God, they have more true faith and obedience, and their sense of reason is comparatively normal"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. People Make Too Many Demands of God). God's word revealed the corruption in my heart. I recalled how when I accepted God's work of the last days, I prayed to God and said, "No matter what environment God

arranges, or whether I encounter difficulties or experience great trials, I will accept and obey. No matter what happens, I will follow God.” But now, I had been placed in a real environment, but I couldn’t accept it. I suddenly realized that my obedience to God’s sovereignty and arrangement had merely been lip service. When the church had arranged for me to preach the gospel, I believed that it was an important duty, and my brothers and sisters also praised and looked up to me, so I really liked that duty, and thus I was very diligent and worked very hard at it. But when the leader arranged for me to handle general affairs, I felt like I had suddenly gone from being highly regarded by everyone to being a laborer no one cared about, and it was very embarrassing. I felt that the brothers and sisters would no longer look up to me like they used to. So, from the bottom of my heart, I couldn’t accept this duty, and I even thought my leader’s arrangements were wrong. I took my dignity and status far too seriously, and I was selfish and picky toward my duties. I just wanted to do a duty that would let me show off and earn others’ admiration, not an inconspicuous one. When the duty arranged for me didn’t let me show off or earn others’ admiration, my heart was full of resistance and complaints, and I could never bring myself to obey, which caused me to lose the Holy Spirit’s work and live in darkness. From God’s word, I understood that if I wanted to become genuinely obedient to God, then not only did I have to obey God’s arrangements when the environment suited me, more importantly, I had to obey when it didn’t. Even if I lost face, or my brothers and sisters didn’t look up to me, I had to accept and obey.

Later, at a gathering, I openly fellowshiped on my state, and my brothers and sisters sent me a passage of God’s word: **“What does Satan use to keep man firmly within its control? (Fame and gain.) So, Satan uses fame and gain to control man’s thoughts, until all people can think**

of is fame and gain. They struggle for fame and gain, suffer hardships for fame and gain, endure humiliation for fame and gain, sacrifice everything they have for fame and gain, and they will make any judgment or decision for the sake of fame and gain. In this way, Satan binds people with invisible shackles, and they have neither the strength nor the courage to throw them off. They unknowingly bear these shackles and trudge ever onward with great difficulty. For the sake of this fame and gain, mankind shuns God and betrays Him and becomes increasingly wicked. In this way, therefore, one generation after another is destroyed in the midst of Satan's fame and gain. Looking now at Satan's actions, are its sinister motives not utterly detestable? Maybe today you still cannot see through Satan's sinister motives because you think one cannot live without fame and gain. You think that if people leave fame and gain behind, they will no longer be able to see the way ahead, no longer be able to see their goals, that their futures will become dark, dim and gloomy. But, slowly, you will all one day recognize that fame and gain are monstrous shackles that Satan uses to bind man. When that day comes, you will thoroughly resist Satan's control and thoroughly resist the shackles Satan uses to bind you. When the time comes that you wish to throw off all the things Satan has instilled in you, you will then make a clean break with Satan and you will truly loathe all that Satan has brought to you. Only then will mankind have a real love and yearning for God" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). After contemplating God's word, I realized the reason that I kept thinking handling general affairs was something unremarkable, that it made me lose face and harmed my image, and that I couldn't bring myself to obey, was all because of harm caused by Satan. Satan uses fame and gain to control people's hearts, and makes

people struggle for fame and gain and sacrifice everything for them. I had also unconsciously been deceived and corrupted by Satan. I recalled how my parents taught me as a child to earn the respect and admiration of others. So, from a young age, I believed I should rise above others and be outstanding. In addition, society and the media also promote these views, and I saw how some famous and high-status people enjoy better treatment than average people, so I was determined to get ahead and be admired by everyone. After I accepted God's work in the last days, I still lived by these perspectives, and I erroneously believed that gospel work was important and could earn others' admiration and respect, but no one looks up to those taking care of daily tasks. I thought of duties as better or worse, and wanted to do whatever duty would let me stand out. When my leader arranged for me to handle general affairs based on our work needs, all I thought about were my own dignity and status, and from deep in my heart, I couldn't accept it or obey. I didn't seek God's will at all, nor did I consider the needs of the church's work. I was so selfish and despicable! That was when I realized that wanting to continue preaching the gospel wasn't actually being considerate of God's will. I simply wanted the duty as a springboard for me to earn everyone's admiration. I only wanted to use my duty to show off and make people look up to me, so that I could get fame and gain. When the leader arranged for me to handle general affairs, my ambition to be highly regarded was shattered, so I passively shrank away, and even lacked the motivation to perform my duty. I thought of how some brothers and sisters used to have worldly status and prestige, but they were able to let go of it, and no matter what duty the church arranged for them, whether their duty was insignificant or not, they could still accept and obey. Upon comparing myself to them, I felt ashamed. I didn't have a place for God in my heart, or even the most basic obedience to God. Now I realized how irrational it was

to pursue fame, gain, and status. If I kept pursuing like this, I would never understand or obtain the truth, and sooner or later I would be cast out. After that, I read some of God's words: **"If everything you think about during your available hours each day has to do with how to resolve your corrupt disposition, how to practice the truth, and how to understand the truth principles, then you will learn to use the truth to resolve your problems according to God's words. You will thus gain the ability to live independently, you will have life entry, you will face no great difficulties in following God, and gradually, you will enter into the truth reality. If, in your heart, you are still fixated on prestige and status, still preoccupied with showing off and making others look up to you, then you are not someone who pursues the truth, and you are walking down the wrong path. What you pursue is not the truth, nor is it the life, but the things that you love, it is reputation, profit, and status—in which case, nothing you do relates to the truth, it is all evil doing, and rendering service. If, in your heart, you love the truth, and always strive for the truth, if you pursue dispositional change, are able to achieve true obedience to God, and can fear God and shun evil, and if you are restrained in everything you do, and are able to accept God's scrutiny, then your state will keep improving, and you will be someone who lives before God. ... Those who love the truth seek it in all things, they reflect on themselves and try to know themselves, they focus on practicing the truth, and they always have obedience to God and fear of God in their hearts. If any notions or misunderstandings of God arise in them, they pray to God right away and seek the truth to resolve them. They focus on performing their duties well, such that God's will is satisfied; and they strive toward the truth and pursue knowledge of God, coming to have God-fearing hearts and shunning all evil deeds.**

These are people who always live before God” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Good Behavior Does Not Mean One’s Disposition Has Changed). After reading God’s word, I realized that, if I wanted to get onto the right track of believing in God, to pursue the truth and achieve change in my disposition, then I needed to change my wrong viewpoint of pursuit. Regardless of whether I could show off or be admired by others in my duty, I should accept my duty and perform it loyally. This is the attitude I should have toward my duty, and the rationality that created beings should possess. If I performed my duty without pursuing the truth, and could not obey God, if I only did it to seek fame and status, and to earn the respect of my brothers and sisters, then that would mean I was taking a path of opposing God. If I didn’t change my ways, then in the end, I could only be rejected and cast out. Believing in God and fulfilling my duties require setting my motives straight, focusing on seeking and practicing the truth, letting go of my ambitions and desires, and doing things according to God’s requirements. Only then could I be obedient to God, and only in this way could I change my corrupt dispositions. Once I understood this, I had a direction, and from deep down inside I became willing to accept my duty. Whether or not people looked up to me, I had to perform my duty as best I could.

After that, I read two passages of God’s word: **“For you to be able to fulfill your duty in God’s house today, whether it’s big or small, whether it’s physical or mental, and whether it’s handling external issues or internal work, no one’s performing of their duty is happening by accident. How could this be your choice? This is all led by God. It’s only because of God’s commissioning you that you’re moved like this, you have this sense of mission and responsibility, and you can fulfill this duty. There are so many among unbelievers with good looks, knowledge, or talent, but does God favor them? No, He doesn’t. God**

did not select them, and He favors only the lot of you. He has all of you undertake every kind of role, fulfill all kinds of duties, and take up different kinds of responsibilities in His management work. When God's management plan finally comes to an end and is achieved, what a glory and a privilege this will be! So then, when people suffer a little hardship while they fulfill their duty today; when they have to give some things up, expend themselves a little, and pay a certain price; when they lose their status and their fame and fortune in the world; and when these things are all gone, it seems like it's all been taken from them by God, but they've gained something more precious and more valuable. What have people gained from God? They've gained the truth and life by fulfilling their duty. Only when you've fulfilled your duty, you've completed God's commission, you live your whole life for your mission and the commission God's given you, you have a beautiful testimony, and you live a life that has value—only then are you a real person! And why do I say you're a real person? Because God has selected you and had you fulfill your duty as a created being within His management. This is the greatest value and the greatest meaning in your life" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). "If you wish to give all your devotion in all things to satisfy God's will, you cannot do it by just performing one duty; you must accept any commission God bestows upon you. Whether it is to your tastes and matches your interests, or is something you do not enjoy, have never done before, or is difficult, you should still accept it and obey. Not only must you accept it, but you must also proactively cooperate, and learn about it, while experiencing and entering. Even if you suffer hardship, are tired, humiliated, or are ostracized, you must still give it all your devotion. Only by practicing in this way will you be able to give all your

devotion in all things and satisfy God's will. You must regard it as your duty to fulfill, not as personal business. How should you understand duties? As something that the Creator—God—gives someone to do; this is how people's duties come about. The commission that God gives you is your duty, and it is perfectly natural and justified that you perform your duty as God demands. If it is clear to you that this duty is God's commission, and that this is God's love and God's blessing coming upon you, then you will be able to accept your duty with a God-loving heart, and you will be able to be mindful of God's will as you perform your duty, and you will be able to overcome all difficulties to satisfy God. Those who truly expend themselves for God could never refuse God's commission; they could never refuse any duty. No matter what duty God entrusts you with, regardless of what difficulties it entails, you should not refuse it, but accept it. This is the path of practice, which is to practice the truth and give all your devotion in all things, in order to satisfy God. What is the focus here? It is on the words 'in all things.' 'All things' does not necessarily mean things that you like or are good at, much less things with which you are familiar. Sometimes they will be things you are not good at, things you need to learn, things which are difficult, or things where you must suffer. However, regardless of what thing it is, as long as God has entrusted you with it, you must accept it from Him, and having accepted it, you must perform the duty well, giving it all your devotion and satisfying God's will. This is the path of practice. No matter what happens, you must always seek the truth, and once you are certain what sort of practice is in line with God's will, that is how you should practice. Only by doing this are you practicing the truth, and only in this way can you enter the truth reality" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part

Three). After reading God's word, I realized that no duty comes to someone by accident. It comes from God's sovereignty and arrangement. I couldn't follow my own preferences, I had to obey and perform my duty well with all my heart and strength. Only living this way is significant and not in vain. Previously, I had been hypnotized by fame and gain, I didn't understand God's sovereignty, so I couldn't treat my duty correctly, and I viewed duties as better and worse. I now understood that no duty is above or below another, we simply perform different functions. Whether it's preaching the gospel or handling general affairs, I must accept it. No matter what duty we perform in God's house, God wants us to pursue truth and emphasize life entry. If I only performed my duty to be admired and gain reputation and status, then I wouldn't be fulfilling the duty of a created being, I would be scheming for my own ends. I would be rebelling against and opposing God. If that were the case, then even if I was admired by other people, God wouldn't approve, so what would be the point in doing it? Though handling general affairs didn't seem like anything remarkable to me, this environment allowed me to reflect and know myself, pursue the truth, learn lessons, and ultimately, it allowed me to let go of my desire for reputation and status, and learn to obey. This was God's salvation for me. Actually, in handling church affairs, I encountered various things that required considering of the interests of the church, during which time I needed to seek the truth and act according to principles. Was this not a great opportunity for me to practice the truth and fulfill my duty to satisfy God? Once I realized this, I prayed to God, "God, I don't want to rebel against You any longer. I want to submit to Your orchestrations and arrangements, accept Your observation and perform my duties with a heart full of love for You." After I prayed, I felt a sense of release, and I had the confidence to properly perform my duty.

One time, I was working with my brothers and sisters to complete a task. I watched them perform their duties carefully, conscientiously considering and inspecting each detail of their work so that the interests of the church didn't suffer. I thought back on how I'd held the wrong attitude toward my duty ever since taking it up. I simply did whatever was arranged by my leader, and never considered how to perform the duty well. Fulfilling my duties in this way hurt God and made Him despise me. Later, I no longer worried about whether I was looked up to by others. Instead, I thought seriously about the church's interests, and I was also careful and deliberate in my tasks. When I performed my duties that way, I felt at peace, and no longer felt tired. I gained much from my experience, and I understood that God had given me a duty I didn't like to make me reflect and realize that my pursuit of reputation and status had been wrong, to save me from the bondage and constraints of reputation and status. He was leading me down the path of pursuing the truth. This was all God's love for me. I understood God's good intentions and saw that no matter what befalls me, even when it is something or some duty that doesn't fit my notions, it is beneficial for my life. I could no longer rebel against God. I had to become obedient to God and perform my duties in a grounded way.

Soon afterward, the brother who had been in charge of general affairs returned. The leader arranged for me to work with this brother and continue taking care of general affairs. When I received this news, I thought, "This time, I can't let my preferences dictate how I treat my duties. I must accept and obey God's orchestrations and arrangements." I knew that this was God showing me grace, giving me another chance to train myself and enter into His words. With my previous experience, I had no more negative thoughts in my duty, I no longer looked down on my duty, and no longer was I saddened at not being admired by others. Instead, I performed my duty in a

down-to-earth manner and sought to satisfy God's will. I read some of God's words: **"For all who perform a duty, no matter how profound or shallow their understanding of the truth is, the simplest way to practice entering into the truth reality is to think of the interests of God's house in everything, and to let go of one's selfish desires, personal intents, motives, pride, and status. Put the interests of God's house first—this is the least one should do. If a person who performs a duty cannot even do this much, then how can they be said to be performing their duty? That is not performing one's duty. You should first think of the interests of God's house, be considerate of God's will, and consider the work of the church. Put these things first and foremost; only after that can you think about the stability of your status or how others regard you. Do you not feel that this becomes a little easier when you divide it into two steps and make some compromises? If you practice like this for a while, you will come to feel that satisfying God is not such a difficult thing. Furthermore, you should be able to fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duty, and set aside your selfish desires, intents, and motives; you should have consideration for God's will, and put the interests of God's house, the work of the church, and the duty that you are supposed to perform first. After experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to comport yourself. It is living straightforwardly and honestly, and not being a base, vile person; it is living justly and honorably rather than being despicable, base, and a good-for-nothing. You will feel that this is how a person should act and the image that they should live out. Gradually, your desire to satisfy your own interests will lessen"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). God's word brightened my heart. When we

fulfill our duties, we should accept God's observation, and let go of our desires, intentions and motivations. We should offer up our sincere hearts, do things for the benefit of the church, and do our best in everything we ought to do. Only in this way can we fulfill the duty of a created being, live in an upright manner, and possess the humanity and reason that people are meant to have. When I practiced like this, I felt I had peace of mind, and was at ease.

I'm very happy in my duty now, and I've gained much. I know that without being exposed by the facts, and without the judgment of God's word, I would not have recognized my own corruption, nor would I have been able to see the importance of pursuing the truth. After this experience, I also realized that the duty I perform is arranged by God, and it is based on my needs in terms of life entry, so I should accept and obey, pursue the truth, perform my duties with my whole heart and mind, and become someone who truly obeys God and earns God's approval.

10. I've Witnessed God's Appearance

By Martin, South Korea

I used to be part of a Korean Presbyterian church. Everyone in my family became believers when my daughter fell ill. After that, she started improving day by day. I was incredibly grateful for the Lord Jesus' mercy. I swore I'd faithfully follow the Lord from then on, work hard to be the sort of person He requires and brings Him joy. I never missed a church service, no matter how busy I was with work, I was always giving alms and offerings, and actively participated in church activities. Most of my time went into reading the Bible and participating in church activities, and I hardly ever went to dinner parties and get-togethers organized by my relatives, friends, colleagues and such. They got frustrated with me for that. When I stopped drinking alcohol and smoking after becoming a believer, and didn't go party with them anymore, some of my friends often taunted me, saying things like, "You love going to church so much, so tell us, what does going to church every day do for you? What's the point of this faith of yours?" To tell the truth, barraged with question after question, I didn't really know what to say. But it was because of their questions that I started to really ponder: What is my faith really for? Is it to ask God to cure my daughter, or to keep my family well? Is having faith just reading the Bible and going to church every day? I really didn't know. I brought these questions to the clergy of my church. Their responses were all pretty much the same: Our faith is for the grace of the Lord's salvation, and when He returns He'll take us up into heaven for eternal life. That sort of response seemed to resolve my confusion, but it brought up another question: Then how do I get into heaven? They told me, "Romans 10:10 says, 'For with the heart man believes to righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made

to salvation.’ This means our sins are forgiven by the Lord, so we’re saved by faith, and the Lord will take us straight up into the kingdom when He returns. So, you don’t need to worry about getting into heaven as long as you have faith.” I thought of the Bible verse: **“Without holiness no man shall see the Lord”** (Hebrews 12:14). God is holy, and He requires us to become holy, but I was living in sin and couldn’t put His words into practice. How was I worthy of the kingdom? The Lord Jesus told us: **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like to it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself”** (Matthew 22:37–39). But in daily life, just that simple requirement to love was something I couldn’t do, no matter how hard I tried. I loved my family much more than I loved the Lord, and I couldn’t truly love others like myself. When my friends and relatives made fun of me, I resented them for it, instead of being tolerant and patient. I also thought of Hebrews 10:26 that says: **“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins.”** I knew what the Lord required but I couldn’t carry it out. I kept living in sin, so I didn’t see how my outcome would be any different from unbelievers’. This made me think that getting into the kingdom couldn’t be as simple as the clergy said, but I still didn’t know how I could enter heaven and gain eternal life. I still didn’t have a path. I kept asking the clergy and my church friends questions, but none of them had a clear answer. They just asked me why I was asking these weird questions, and said this is how people have practiced faith for ages. I was still just as puzzled as always, so I decided to reread all four of the Gospels, thinking that there must be an answer in the Lord Jesus’ words.

One day in 2008, I read these verses: **“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die”** (John 11:25–26). These verses puzzled me when I read them. Why would the Lord say that we should live and believe in Him? As believers, weren’t we all alive and believing in Him? Would the Lord see us as dead for some reason? It brought up lots of questions for me. For a while, I spent every spare moment puzzling over this, but I never could figure out its true meaning. I went to the clergy and other church members again with my questions, and not only did they not have an answer, but had a laugh at my expense. But I kept on feeling like there was some deeper meaning hidden in what the Lord said.

Then one time I read this in the Gospel of Matthew: “And another of His disciples said to Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said to him, **Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead**” (Matthew 8:21–22). When I saw the phrase **“let the dead bury their dead,”** I was a little confused. Why would the Lord call people dead, who were alive at the time? Did the Lord see us as living, or as dead? I thought of the Bible saying the wages of sin is death. I was living in sin, and was that what the Lord meant by “the dead”? If so, how could I come to life, and how could I get into the kingdom? My heart was full of questions that I couldn’t make heads or tails of. But deep down I was clear on one thing: Since the Lord said these things, the answer must be in the Bible somewhere. So I didn’t lose faith, but kept looking for the answer.

Thanks to the Lord’s guidance, a few months later, I read another thing He said: **“Truly, truly, I say to you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that**

hear shall live” (John 5:25). It immediately became clear to me that the dead come back to life when they hear God’s voice. I was certain that this was the answer I’d been looking for! But I was still a little confused, thinking that I’d heard the Lord’s voice a long time ago, but I still wasn’t free from the bonds of sin. Did I count as living? What was “**they that hear shall live**” really referring to? How do people come to life? Was the Lord going to have more to say when He returned that we needed to hear? And if so, how could we hear God’s voice? Where could we hear it? I couldn’t figure it out, so I prayed to the Lord, “Oh Lord, please let me hear Your voice as soon as possible. I don’t want to be dead. Please help me live.”

After that, when I went to church services, I started to pay attention to whether the pastors ever said anything about the Lord’s return or the Lord’s voice in their sermons. I was really disappointed that all they did was tell us to guard against heresy, and to watch and wait, but said nothing at all about the Lord’s return. I also asked some of the key people in charge of the church about these things, but they said my constantly asking these questions was from a lack of faith, that I was just like Thomas. They started ostracizing me. Then other church members that I’d always gotten along with started distancing themselves, and some excluded me. I ended up leaving that church that I’d been a part of for 18 years. I was watching programs from the major Christian networks all day long, hoping to hear God’s voice from the sermons of famous pastors. I did this for nearly six months, watching 10 hours or more of these programs practically every day, but I still didn’t find the answers I wanted. The pastors were just saying that the Lord was going to return very soon and we should watch and wait. But I was overflowing with questions. The Lord was about to return, but when? And why hadn’t we welcomed Him yet? I was constantly praying to the Lord in those days, saying, “Lord! I’ve been waiting for You all this time,

hoping so much to welcome You in my lifetime, to hear Your voice. Oh Lord, when are You coming? Please let me hear Your voice.”

One day in March of 2013, at the entrance to our building, an elderly man who looked like he was 70 something walked toward me, asking me if I wanted to subscribe to a Chosun Ilbo newspaper. I was really dismissive, thinking that now that everyone has cellphones and computers, who reads the newspaper? So I turned him down pretty summarily. But for several days every time he saw me, he kept asking me to subscribe. I kept turning him down. But to my surprise, I ran into that same man a month later by the elevator. It was as if he'd been waiting for me. When he saw me, he smiled and said hello, then asked me to subscribe. I was wondering why this man had been trying to sell me a newspaper for so long. Trying to be nice, I did end up buying a subscription, but for various reasons, I didn't have time to read it for a while. Then one morning in early May after the paper had come, I grabbed it and quickly scanned the headlines like I always did. And there was one that really jumped out at me. It said, “The Lord Jesus Has Returned—Almighty God Has Expressed Words in the Age of Kingdom.” I was shocked—what? The Lord has returned? Almighty God? The Age of Kingdom? Could that really be true? I had a whole tangle of emotions at the time—I was really worked up. I finally found news of the Lord's return. But then I wondered if it could be fake news. I looked at the bottom of the page and saw a number and address for The Church of Almighty God, and some names of books from the Church. I felt like it was important to carefully look into this, because the Lord's return is a really big deal. I called the number I'd found on the paper right away. I heard the voice of a sister answer the call and I asked her eagerly, “Can I ask, is what's printed in this paper really true? Has the Lord returned? Are these words really words from God?” She said, “It's true.”

Sisters Kathy and Zena from The Church of Almighty God set up a time to gather with me and they fellowshiped with me on God's three stages of work. Kathy said, "Ever since Adam and Eve were corrupted by Satan, man has been living in sin, under Satan's forces, toyed with and hurt by Satan. God has done three stages of work to fully save mankind from Satan's sway, which are the Age of Law, the Age of Grace, and the Age of Kingdom. These are three different stages of work, but they're all done by the same God. Each stage of God's work is based on what's needed for corrupt humanity, and each one is built upon the previous one, to perform more profound and elevated work." Then she read a passage of Almighty God's words: **"The six-thousand-year management plan is divided into three stages of work. No one stage alone can represent the work of the three ages, but only one part of a whole. The name Jehovah cannot represent the whole of God's disposition. The fact that He carried out His work in the Age of Law does not prove that God can only be God under the law. Jehovah set forth laws for man and handed down commandments to him, asking man to build the temple and the altars; the work He did represents only the Age of Law. This work that He did does not prove that God is only a God who asks man to keep the law, or that He is the God in the temple, or that He is the God before the altar. To say this would be untrue. The work done under the law can only represent one age. Therefore, if God only did the work in the Age of Law, then man would confine God within the following definition, saying, 'God is the God in the temple, and, in order to serve God we must put on priestly robes and enter the temple.' If the work in the Age of Grace had never been carried out and the Age of Law had continued until the present, man would not know that God is also merciful and loving. If the work in the Age of Law had not been done, and instead**

only the work in the Age of Grace, then all man would know is that God can only redeem man and forgive man's sins. Man would know only that He is holy and innocent, and that for man's sake He is able to sacrifice Himself and be crucified. Man would know only these things but have no understanding of anything else. Each age therefore represents one part of God's disposition. As for which aspects of God's disposition are represented in the Age of Law, which in the Age of Grace, and which in this present stage: only when all three stages have been integrated into one whole can they reveal the entirety of God's disposition. Only when man has come to know all three stages can he understand it fully. None of the three stages can be omitted. You will only see the disposition of God in its entirety after coming to know these three stages of work. The fact that God completed His work in the Age of Law does not prove that He is only the God under the law, and the fact that He completed His work of redemption does not mean that God will forever redeem mankind. These are all conclusions drawn by man. The Age of Grace having come to an end, you cannot then say that God belongs only to the cross and that the cross alone represents the salvation of God. To do so would be to define God. In the present stage, God is mainly doing the work of the word, but you cannot say then that God has never been merciful to man and that all He has brought is chastisement and judgment. The work in the last days lays bare the work of Jehovah and Jesus and all mysteries not understood by man, so as to reveal the destination and the end of mankind and end all the work of salvation among mankind. This stage of work in the last days brings everything to a close. All mysteries not understood by man need to be unraveled to allow man to plumb them to their depths and have a completely clear understanding in his heart. Only then can the

human race be classed according to kind. Only after the six-thousand-year management plan is completed will man come to understand the disposition of God in its entirety, for His management will then have come to an end” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Mystery of the Incarnation (4)). Then Kathy shared so much more fellowship with me and I learned that God’s 6,000-year management plan is divided into three ages, three stages—the Age of Law, the Age of Grace, and the Age of Kingdom. In the Age of Law, Jehovah issued the law mainly to lead people to live on earth and let them know what sin is. In the Age of Grace, the Lord Jesus completed the work of redemption. He was crucified for mankind, redeeming us of sin. As long as we believed in the Lord, confessed our sins and repented, our sins would be forgiven, and we’d no longer be condemned and punished for sinning under the law. In the Age of Kingdom, Almighty God is expressing truths, doing the work of judgment, cleansing people’s corrupt dispositions, saving people from Satan’s dominion, from sin, so that we can submit to and worship God, no longer live in sin, and be taken into the kingdom of heaven by God. The three stages of work occur in different ages, God’s names change, He appears to mankind in different ways, His work includes different things, and He carries it out in different places, but it’s all done by one God. It’s a single God doing different work in different ages. Understanding this was really enlightening for me.

Then Zena gave me fellowship on how Almighty God cleanses and changes people through His work of judgment. She shared this passage of God’s words: **“Christ of the last days uses a variety of truths to teach man, to expose the substance of man, and to dissect the words and deeds of man. These words comprise various truths, such as man’s duty, how man should obey God, how man should be loyal to God, how man ought to live out normal humanity, as well as the wisdom and the**

disposition of God, and so on. These words are all directed at the substance of man and his corrupt disposition. In particular, the words that expose how man spurns God are spoken in regard to how man is an embodiment of Satan, and an enemy force against God. In undertaking His work of judgment, God does not simply make clear the nature of man with a few words; He exposes, deals with, and prunes over the long term. All these different methods of exposure, dealing, and pruning cannot be substituted with ordinary words, but with the truth of which man is utterly bereft. Only methods such as these can be called judgment; only through judgment of this kind can man be subdued and thoroughly convinced about God, and moreover gain true knowledge of God. What the work of judgment brings about is man's understanding of the true face of God and the truth about his own rebelliousness. The work of judgment allows man to gain much understanding of the will of God, of the purpose of God's work, and of the mysteries that are incomprehensible to him. It also allows man to recognize and know his corrupt essence and the roots of his corruption, as well as to discover the ugliness of man. These effects are all brought about by the work of judgment, for the essence of this work is actually the work of opening up the truth, the way, and the life of God to all those who have faith in Him. This work is the work of judgment done by God" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Christ Does the Work of Judgment With the Truth). Then Zena told me, "Almighty God uses the truth to judge and cleanse people. He has expressed millions of words that reveal the mysteries of the Bible and bear witness to God's work, and they expose the root of man's sinfulness and the truth of our corruption. Some are about how to be freed from sin to achieve dispositional change, and some are about determining people's outcomes, etc. It's all the truth and it all comes

from God. Almighty God has expressed all the truths people need to possess in order to be cleansed and fully saved, while also displaying God's righteous disposition and His almightiness and wisdom. Anyone who reads Almighty God's words can feel their authority and power. God sees all, and only God knows corrupt mankind backward and forward. God exposes people's every thought, viewpoint, idea and corrupt disposition, fully resolving mankind's sinfulness and opposition to God from its root. Through the judgment, revelations and refinements of God's words, we gain some understanding of the truth of our satanic corruption. Then we see how arrogant and crooked we are, that everything we say and do reveals our corrupt dispositions. We fight for name and status, engage in intrigue, lie and cheat, get into jealous struggles, and don't submit to God whatsoever. We don't remotely live out a human likeness. Then we're full of heartfelt regret and hate ourselves, we become able to repent, accept His judgment and chastisement, and carry out His words. We are gradually freed from the bonds of sin and have some changes in our corrupt dispositions. Without God's words exposing and judging us, but just relying on prayer and confession, we'd never resolve the root of our sin. Through experience we also see that without God's judgment and chastisement, our corrupt dispositions could never be cleansed and transformed. That's why accepting God's judgment work of the last days is the only path into the kingdom." Then the two sisters told me about their personal testimony of experiencing the judgment and chastisement of God's words. It was all so practical. I could tell that Almighty God's work was exactly what I needed spiritually, that God's work of the last days really can change and cleanse people, and the only way to get into the kingdom is by accepting God's judgment of the last days.

Over the next few days the sisters also told me about why the religious world is so desolate now and pastors' sermons are running dry. They also shared with me the real story behind the Bible and the mysteries and meaning of God's incarnations. I felt like Almighty God's words contained so much and opened my eyes to so many mysteries of the truth. After looking into it, I became certain that Almighty God's words are the voice of God, that He is the Lord Jesus returned, and I happily accepted Almighty God's salvation of the last days.

Later, the sisters gave me a couple books of God's words. I opened up one of them when I got home, **The Scroll Opened by the Lamb**. The first thing I saw was some of God's words in **Preface**: **"Though many people believe in God, few understand what faith in God means, and what they must do to conform to God's will. This is because, though people are familiar with the word 'God' and phrases such as 'the work of God,' they do not know God, and still less do they know His work. No wonder, then, that all those who do not know God are muddled in their belief of Him. People do not take belief in God seriously, and this is entirely because believing in God is too unfamiliar, too strange for them. In this way, they fall short of God's demands. In other words, if people do not know God, and do not know His work, then they are not fit for God's use, and still less are they able to satisfy His will. 'Belief in God' means believing that there is a God; this is the simplest concept as regards believing in God. What's more, believing that there is a God is not the same as truly believing in God; rather, it is a kind of simple faith with strong religious overtones. True faith in God means the following: On the basis of the belief that God holds sovereignty over all things, one experiences His words and His work, purges one's corrupt disposition, satisfies the will of God, and comes to know God. Only a**

journey of this kind may be called ‘faith in God’” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God). Almighty God’s words are detailed and practical, and show the true meaning of faith in God. I realized that faith requires experiencing God’s words and work so we can cast off corruption, gain the truth and know God. Only that is true faith. I used to think faith meant praying every day and going to church a lot. Sadly, I could never figure out if I was on the right path of faith or not, so I just stumbled along until then. Reading Almighty God’s words, I realized that the path I’d taken in my faith before was entirely wrong. Then I saw in the table of contents the title **“Are You Someone Who Has Come to Life?”** It drew me in and I turned to it right away. It had these words from God: **“God created man, but then man was corrupted by Satan, such that people became ‘dead men.’ So, after you have changed, you will no longer be like these ‘dead men.’ It is the words of God that set people’s spirits alight and cause them to be reborn, and when people’s spirits are reborn, then they will have come to life. When I speak of ‘dead men,’ I am referring to corpses that have no spirit, to people whose spirits have died within them. When the spark of life is lit in people’s spirits, then people come to life. The saints that were spoken of before refer to people who have come to life, those who were under Satan’s influence but defeated Satan”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God). **“‘The dead’ are those who oppose and rebel against God; they are those who are numb in spirit and do not understand God’s words; they are those who do not put the truth into practice and have not the slightest loyalty to God, and they are those who live under the power of Satan and are exploited by Satan. The dead manifest themselves by standing in opposition to the truth, by rebelling against God, and by being lowly, contemptible, malicious, brutish, deceitful, and insidious. Even if such people eat and drink the**

words of God, they are unable to live out the words of God; though they are alive, they are just walking, breathing corpses. The dead are totally incapable of satisfying God, much less of being utterly obedient to Him. They can only deceive Him, blaspheme against Him, and betray Him, and all that they bring forth by the way they live reveals the nature of Satan. If people wish to become living beings and to bear testimony to God, and to be approved of by God, then they must accept God's salvation; they must gladly submit to His judgment and chastisement and must gladly accept the pruning of God and being dealt with by Him. Only then will they be able to put all of the truths required by God into practice, and only then will they gain God's salvation and truly become living beings. The living are saved by God; they have been judged and chastised by God, they are willing to devote themselves and are happy to lay down their lives for God, and they would gladly dedicate their whole lives to God. Only when the living bear testimony to God can Satan be shamed; only the living can spread the gospel work of God, only the living are after God's heart, and only the living are real people" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God). After reading this, I knew in my heart that this was the answer I'd been seeking all those years. I finally knew what it meant to be "dead" or to "live." When God created Adam and Eve, they could listen to God, manifest and glorify Him. They were living people with spirits. Then Satan tempted them to betray God and they started living in sin, under Satan's power, and that's how mankind became more and more corrupt, with all sorts of Satan's poisons seeping into us. We've sunk deeper into sin, denying God, disobeying and resisting Him, living out satanic dispositions. We're nothing like how God made us in the beginning. God sees everyone who lives in sin and under Satan's power as dead, and the dead belong to Satan, they oppose

God. They aren't worthy of His kingdom. The living are those saved by God. Their corruption is cleansed through God's judgment and chastisement. They cast off sin, Satan's forces, and stop rebelling against and opposing God. No matter how God speaks and works, they can listen and obey. The living can bear witness to and glorify God, and they are the only ones who can gain God's approval and enter His kingdom. To become living, we have to accept the truths Almighty God expresses and experience His judgment, ultimately be freed from sin, become cleansed and regain our conscience and reason, obey the Creator and put God's words into practice, and worship and bear witness to God. This is someone who has truly come back to life, who can enter the kingdom and gain eternal life. At that point I really understood what the Lord meant by **"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die"** (John 11:25–26). My heart brightened once I understood all that.

After that, I read another article, **"Only Christ of the Last Days Can Give Man the Way of Eternal Life."** It was really mind-blowing for me. God says: **"Christ of the last days brings life, and brings the enduring and everlasting way of truth. This truth is the path by which man gains life, and it is the only path by which man shall know God and be approved by God. If you do not seek the way of life provided by Christ of the last days, then you shall never gain the approval of Jesus, and shall never be qualified to enter the gate of the kingdom of heaven, for you are both a puppet and prisoner of history. Those who are controlled by regulations, by words, and shackled by history will never be able to gain life nor gain the perpetual way of life. This is because all they have is turbid water which has been clung to for thousands of years instead of the water of life that flows from the throne. Those who**

are not supplied with the water of life will forever remain corpses, playthings of Satan, and sons of hell. How, then, can they behold God? If you only try to hold on to the past, only try to keep things as they are by standing still, and do not try to change the status quo and discard history, then will you not always be against God? The steps of God's work are vast and mighty, like surging waves and rolling thunders—yet you sit passively awaiting destruction, clinging to your folly and doing nothing. In this way, how can you be considered someone who follows the footsteps of the Lamb? How can you justify the God that you hold on to as a God who is always new and never old? And how can the words of your yellowed books carry you across into a new age? How can they lead you to seek the steps of God's work? And how can they take you up to heaven? What you hold in your hands are words that can provide but temporary solace, not truths that are capable of giving life. The words of scriptures you read can only enrich your tongue and are not words of philosophy that can help you know human life, much less the paths that can lead you to perfection. Does this discrepancy not give you cause for reflection? Does it not make you realize the mysteries contained within? Are you capable of delivering yourself to heaven to meet God on your own? Without the coming of God, can you take yourself into heaven to enjoy family happiness with God? Are you still dreaming now? I suggest, then, that you stop dreaming and look at who is working now—look to see who is now carrying out the work of saving man during the last days. If you do not, you shall never gain the truth, and shall never gain life” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God). This was so authoritative and powerful, and those words could only come from God. I remembered the Lord Jesus saying: **“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by Me”** (John 14:6). Aside

from God, who could possibly rule over the gate of the kingdom? If we want to enter the kingdom of heaven and gain eternal life, we have to accept the way of eternal life brought by Christ of the last days. That means accepting the truths expressed by the Lord Jesus returned, and that's the only way to realize our hopes of entering the kingdom and gaining eternal life. I felt so fortunate that I was able to find the path into the kingdom. I was so excited. I read Almighty God's words like they were food for a starving man, and they had such a deep impact on me. The more I read, the more I knew they were the truth, that they couldn't have come from any pastor or theologian. Almighty God's words nurtured my thirsty soul, and I thought back to that old man selling newspapers. He kept asking me to buy a subscription, and that's why I finally heard God's voice. Then I realized it was God's wonderful deeds that allowed for it. I'm truly grateful to God. I feel so incredibly blessed that I've been able to hear God's voice and witness His appearance in my lifetime. This is God's tremendous mercy and grace, and even more, His salvation for me. Thanks be to Almighty God!

11. Reflections on Seeking Name and Gain

By Martial, Côte d'Ivoire

In May 2021, I was elected as team leader and was responsible for the watering work. I was really happy when I heard the news because by watering my brothers and sisters, I would be able to gain a great degree of enlightenment and richer experiences. If I could solve the problems they faced in life entry, my brothers and sisters would certainly say I was good and someone who understands the truth, and that I could become a pillar of the church. So, I threw myself into my duties, often went to gatherings to fellowship with my brothers and sisters, and when they had difficulties, I took the initiative to seek within God's word to help them resolve these difficulties. After a while, my brothers and sisters come to me for fellowship if they had any questions, and I was very happy.

Over time, as more people accepted God's work in the last days, the number of people in the church gradually increased. One day, I learned that a church leader would come to water newcomers and follow up on my work. If the brothers and sisters had problems to resolve, they could also ask him. When I heard this, I wasn't very happy at all because this leader had watered me before, had good caliber, understood more than me, fellowshiped on God's word rather clearly, and was able to solve the problems of our brothers and sisters easily. I thought to myself, "Now, he's coming to be my partner, so will the brothers and sisters come to me with all their questions like before? Will they push me aside and ask my leader? Who will look up to me in the future? My status in the hearts of brothers and sisters will be gone." Thinking of this, I didn't want to partner with the leader at all. At the same time, I felt a sense of crisis. I said to myself, "I can't allow this. I need to maintain my status in the hearts of the brothers

and sisters.” From then on, when I heard the brothers and sisters were in a bad state or had difficulties, I raced to fellowship with them and resolve their problems, out of fear my leader would get to them first. I also contacted the brothers and sisters individually to ask if they needed help, and told them if they had any questions or confusion, they could reach out to me and that I could help. That way, I thought the brothers and sisters would not seek out the leader with their problems. But things didn’t go as smoothly as I planned. I couldn’t see clearly into many of the problems they asked me about and I didn’t know how to solve them, but I didn’t want to ask the leader. I thought to myself, “If I ask the leader, won’t he think I don’t understand the truth and that I can’t solve problems? Moreover, if I leave the leader to resolve the brothers’ and sisters’ problems, won’t they think I’m incompetent and can’t help them?” I didn’t want to show them I couldn’t help them. I wanted everyone to know I was qualified for this work, so that they could keep asking me when they had questions. But it was hard for me to help my brothers and sisters on my own. There were some things I hadn’t experienced and didn’t know how to fellowship on with them to find a solution, and sometimes it took me several days to find relevant parts of God’s word to resolve their problems, and when other brothers and sisters came to me with questions, I didn’t have time to see to them. A month passed in this way, and because I couldn’t help some of my brothers and sisters in time, their problems remained unresolved and they continued to be in a bad state. I understood clearly that if I had told the leader about these problems I didn’t understand, we could have sought the truth together to help them, and everyone’s problems could have been resolved as soon as possible, but I didn’t do that. I felt a little guilty, knowing that if I continued to do this, I would certainly seriously hinder the life entry of my brothers and sisters.

One day, I saw a passage of God's word, and only then did I have some understanding of my attitudes toward my duties. Almighty God says: **"Duties are tasks entrusted to people by God; they are missions for people to complete. However, a duty is certainly not your personal management, nor is it a stepping stone for you to stand out from the crowd. Some people use their duties as opportunities to engage in their own management and form cliques; some to satisfy their desires; some to fill the voids they feel inside; and some to satisfy their trust-to-luck mentality, thinking that as long as they fulfill their duties, they will have a share in God's house and in the wonderful destination God arranges for man. Such attitudes about duty are incorrect; they disgust God and must be urgently resolved"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). In reading God's word, I understood that our duties are a commission given to us by God, and not a personal matter, and that we shouldn't treat our duties as a means to show off and make others admire us, nor should we use the fulfillment of duties as an opportunity to pursue reputation and status to make others admire us. We should instead treat our duties as an obligation and perform them as required by God. But what was my attitude toward my duty? I performed my duty to pursue fame and gain, and to satisfy my desires. I wanted my brothers and sisters to admire and worship me. I carried no burdens for their life, and I didn't really want to help them, but I wanted them to have a good impression of me so that when they talked about me, they would say that I was very nice and kind. I used my duty to pursue fame, gain, and status, so that I had a place in people's hearts, and so that they would come to me with problems and put God aside. I was running a personal enterprise. This is when I realized my attitude toward duty was wrong. Even if I could help

brothers and sisters, my intention was not to do my duty well, which would never satisfy God.

Later, I saw a passage where God exposed antichrists, and it described my state well. Almighty God says: **“Regardless of the context, no matter what duty they perform, the antichrist will try and give the impression that they aren’t weak, that they are always strong, full of confidence, never negative. They never reveal their real stature or real attitude toward God. In fact, in the depths of their heart, do they really believe there is nothing they cannot do? Do they genuinely believe that they are without weakness, negativity, or outpourings of corruption? Absolutely not. They are good at putting on an act, adept at hiding things. They like showing people their strong and honorable side; they don’t want them to see the side of them that is weak and true. Their purpose is obvious: It is, quite simply, to keep face, to protect the place they have in people’s hearts. They think that if they open up before others about their own negativity and weakness, if they reveal the side of them that is rebellious and corrupt, this will be grievous damage to their status and reputation—more trouble than it’s worth. So they would rather keep their weakness, rebelliousness, and negativity strictly to themselves. And if a day does come when everyone sees the side of them that is weak and rebellious, when they see that they are corrupt, and have not changed at all, they will still keep putting on an act. They think that if they admit to having a corrupt disposition, to being an ordinary person, someone who is small and insignificant, then they will lose their place in people’s hearts, will lose everyone’s veneration and adoration, and thus will have utterly failed. And so, whatever happens, they will not simply open up to people; whatever happens, they will not give their power and status to anyone else; instead, they try as hard as**

they can to compete, and will never give up” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Ten)). I understood after reading this passage of God’s word that antichrists like status. To maintain their good image in other people’s hearts, they never tell people their difficulties, for fear that everyone will see their shortcomings. Even when they encounter difficulties in their duties, they pretend, so that others see them as omnipotent and as someone who understands the truth. This was my state. I clearly had many problems I couldn’t resolve, but I didn’t ask anyone for help and I always disguised myself as I wanted to establish a good image of myself in people’s hearts to make my brothers and sisters think I had no shortcomings or deficiencies, and that I could help them solve all of their problems. To maintain my position and image in their hearts, I disguised myself, choosing to spend a lot of time searching within the word of God rather than seeking from the leader. The result was that I hindered my brothers’ and sisters’ life entry. I saw that my corrupt disposition was serious, and that I was a hypocrite. I thought of how, in early Judaism, the Pharisees were outwardly humble and tolerant. They often prayed at the crossroads or explained the Scriptures to others. They had a good image in people’s hearts, but in reality, on the inside, they were hypocritical, arrogant, evil, they had no obedience or fear of God, and everything they did was not in obedience to the word of God. Instead, they deceived people with good conduct and created illusions to make others admire and worship them. I saw that I was just as hypocritical as the Pharisees and I was walking the antichrist’s path of resisting God.

Later, I read a passage of God’s word: **“The essence of the behavior of antichrists is to constantly use various means and methods to satisfy their ambitions and desires, to mislead and ensnare people, and to gain high status so that people will follow and worship them. It is possible**

that in the depths of their hearts they are not deliberately vying over humanity with God, but one thing is certain: Even when they do not vie with God for humans, they still wish to have status and power among them. Even if the day comes when they realize that they are vying with God for status, and they rein themselves in a bit, they still employ different methods to pursue status and reputation; it is clear to them in their hearts that they will secure legitimate status, by winning the approval and admiration of some people. In short, though everything antichrists do appears to comprise a performance of their duties, its consequence is to mislead people, to make them worship and follow them—in which case, performing their duty in this way is exalting and testifying to themselves. Their ambition to control people and to gain status and power in the church will never change. They are out-and-out antichrists. No matter what God says or does, and no matter what He asks of people, antichrists do not do what they should do or perform their duties in a way that befits His words and requirements, nor do they give up their pursuit of power and status as a result of understanding any of the truth. At all times, their ambitions and desires still remain, they still occupy their hearts and control their whole being, directing their behavior and thoughts, and determining the path they walk. They are bona fide antichrists. What is seen most of all in antichrists? Some people say, ‘Antichrists vie with God to gain people, they do not acknowledge God.’ It is not that they do not acknowledge God; in their hearts they do genuinely acknowledge and believe in His existence. They are willing to follow Him and want to pursue the truth, but they can’t help themselves, and so they can do evil. Though they may say many things that sound good, one thing will never change: Their ambition and desire for power and status will

never change, nor will they give up their pursuit of power and status because of failure or setback, or because God has set them aside or abandoned them. Such is the nature of antichrists” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Five: They Mislead, Draw In, Threaten, and Control People). God says that antichrists pursue fame and status, to make people follow them and achieve their ambition of controlling and possessing people. They compete with God to possess people. This was the path of resisting God that I was walking. I believed in God and wanted to love Him, and I also knew God has sovereignty over all things and is above all. He is the Creator, and we should worship Him. But in the performance of my duties I always wanted to make people admire and worship me to gain a place for myself in people’s hearts. I was walking the path of the antichrist! I thought of the pastors and elders in the religious world, and how even though they preach the gospel, interpret the Bible, pray for people, give blessings, and ostensibly do some good deeds, their purpose in doing all this is to preserve their status and make believers look up to them and follow them and so that whenever believers have questions, they will go to them for guidance. Even when they hear of the Lord’s return and want to seek and investigate the true way, they seek their consent. Isn’t this making people treat them as God? These pastors and leaders exercise firm control over people, they are openly hostile to God, and become antichrists who believe in God yet resist Him at the same time. I was the same. I wanted my brothers and sisters to admire me, and to come to me and not the leader with all their problems. In fact, I had only been a believer for a short time and had little experience. I lacked insight into my brothers’ and sisters’ states and problems. I couldn’t help them very well at all, but I still didn’t seek the truth and was unwilling to partner with the leader, I just wanted the brothers and sisters to revolve around me. I was truly arrogant and unreasonable! In the past I felt only

high-level leaders were likely to walk the antichrists' path and become antichrists, and that as a team leader, without high status, I wouldn't walk that path. But I now realized this view was mistaken. Without the judgment and revelation of God's word, I never would have known that I was walking the path of the antichrist, and I would have lived by a corrupt disposition and done more evil, and been rejected and eliminated by God. I thanked God for enlightening and guiding me to realize this, and vowed to repent, no longer pursue fame, gain, and status, and perform my duty according to God's requirements.

Later, I read another passage of God's words. God says: **"When God requires that people fulfill their duty well, He is not asking them to complete a certain number of tasks or accomplish any great endeavors, nor to perform any great undertakings. What God wants is for people to be able to do all they can in a down-to-earth way, and live in accordance with His words. God does not need you to be great or noble, or bring about any miracles, nor does He want to see any pleasant surprises in you. He does not need such things. All God needs is for you to steadfastly practice according to His words. When you listen to God's words, do what you have understood, carry out what you have comprehended, remember well what you have heard, and then, when the time comes to practice, do so according to God's words. Let them become your life, your realities, and what you live out. Thus, God will be satisfied. You always seek greatness, nobility, and status; you always seek exaltation. How does God feel when He sees this? He loathes it, and He will distance Himself from you. The more you pursue things like greatness, nobility, and being superior to others, distinguished, outstanding, and noteworthy, the more disgusting God finds you. If you do not reflect upon yourself and repent, then God will despise you and**

forsake you. Avoid becoming someone whom God finds disgusting; be a person that God loves. So, how can one attain God's love? By accepting the truth obediently, standing in the position of a created being, acting by God's words with one's feet on the ground, properly performing one's duties, being an honest person, and living out a human likeness. This is enough, God will be satisfied. People must be sure not to hold ambition or entertain idle dreams, not to seek fame, gains, and status or to stand out from the crowd. Even more, they must not try to be a person of greatness or superhuman, superior among men and making others worship them. That is the desire of corrupt humanity, and it is the path of Satan; God does not save such people. ... Performing your duty isn't actually difficult, nor is it hard to do so devotedly, and to an acceptable standard. You don't have to sacrifice your life or do anything special or difficult, you merely have to follow the words and instructions of God honestly and steadfastly, not adding your own ideas or running your own operation, but walking the path of pursuing the truth. If people can do this, they will basically have a human semblance. When they have true obedience to God, and have become an honest person, they will possess the likeness of a true human being"

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation). God's words made me understand His will. Today, God has expressed many words to save people in the hope that we listen to His words, take our place as created beings, perform our duties faithfully according to His requirements, get rid of our corrupt dispositions, and be saved. In our duties we should not engage in personal enterprise to maintain our reputation and status. Instead, we should put aside ulterior motives, diligently pursue the truth and fulfill our duties as created beings

to satisfy God. Thanks to the guidance of God's word, I found a path of practice.

Several days later, a sister told me about her difficulties and said she needed help. I had no experience in this area and I didn't know how to solve it. I realized I couldn't behave as I had and refuse to cooperate with my leader to prove my competence, so I asked my leader about this problem. I said, "I can't resolve this problem. Can you help me?" The leader found suitable parts of God's word and sent them to me, and together, we partnered in fellowship and resolved the sister's trouble. After that, whenever I had any problems I couldn't understand, I would seek with my leader and cooperate with him, and no longer do things alone as I used to. My attitude is different from before. I don't want to think about whether the brothers and sisters will look up to me. Instead, I think about how to better solve their problems. Practicing like this gives me a great sense of ease. Thank God!

12. Freed From Jealousy's Bonds

By Joylene, the Philippines

In January 2018, I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days, and before long I was given a duty in the church as the lead singer in music videos for hymns. At the start, many brothers and sisters noticed me, saying I sang nicely, and wherever I went, they recognized me. This made me happy. A few months later, I was elected as church leader. There were many newcomers to water, and much gospel work to follow up on. To better handle the newcomers' problems, I often watched gospel movies to equip myself with the truth about knowing God's work, and every time the newcomers had certain notions or encountered problems they didn't understand, I was able to actively fellowship with them and resolve their issues. My brothers and sisters often praised me for my good caliber and understanding. I was very happy to earn their approval. However, I was never very effective in gospel work. At that time Sister Claire was transferred to our church to preach the gospel. She quickly threw herself into her work, she was able to fellowship and take the initiative to resolve any problems others had in their duties, and she also actively fellowshipped in gatherings. I should have been happy when I saw that Claire was so responsible in her duty, but for reasons I didn't know, I didn't like her. Every time she fellowshipped with the brothers and sisters, I didn't even want to see her. Especially when I heard them say "Claire is so good, she could be a gospel deacon," I was even more uncomfortable. I thought, "Before Claire came to our church, many of the brothers and sisters all praised me for my good caliber, understanding, and watering of newcomers, and they all looked up to me, but now they all think she is the best and they look up to her. Now who will look up to me?" From that time, I started to

be jealous of Claire, and I worried she could take my place in our brothers' and sisters' hearts.

After that, I saw that Claire often called to ask about newcomers' states, and that many newcomers also sought her to resolve problems. One time, a sister I watered had encountered difficulties in gospel work and asked my opinion. After I fellowshiped with her, she went to seek out Claire. When I learned she went to Claire, it made me sad. I thought to myself, "Maybe she doesn't take my suggestions seriously and must think Claire is better than me, and doesn't look up to me anymore. Since I'm so bad with gospel work, I have to work hard to make up for my deficiencies. Then I won't be worse than Claire, and in the future, if the brothers and sisters have problems, they will come to me instead of her." In the days that followed, I quietly started to compete with Claire. I saw that Claire ate dinner late every day because she was busy with her duty, and she sometimes worked through the night. So I also tried to stay up late for my duty to let the brothers and sisters see I was also responsible and no worse than her. Later, the church held an election for a gospel deacon. Weighing up every aspect, Claire was the best for this duty, but I didn't want to choose her. I thought that she was more capable than me and that if she became a gospel deacon, everyone's attention would gradually shift to her. But considering that church leaders can't do all the work alone and need deacons to take on a portion of the work, I thought to myself, "Should I choose her? If I choose her, the brothers and sisters will definitely flock to her and I will be cast aside." But I had to admit Claire had very high caliber, and she could handle the work of a gospel deacon. I considered it for a long time, and finally reluctantly chose her.

On one occasion, the church was seeking a sister with good Filipino and English to play a role in a music video. Claire's Filipino and English

were both good, and in the end, the brothers and sisters selected her. I was very frustrated, “My Filipino and English are also good, so why did the brothers and sisters choose her instead of me?” I was very jealous of her, and I also felt some hatred for her in my heart. Just at that time, because Claire had revealed a somewhat arrogant disposition, our leaders were investigating how she performed her duties, and they asked me to write an evaluation of her. I was very happy, and I wanted to write more about her deficiencies, so our leaders would move her to other duties and I wouldn’t have to perform duties with her anymore. Though I didn’t do this in the end, I still wanted her to leave. When I thought of how the brothers and sisters all sought her out to seek answers and how they no longer looked up to me, I felt aggrieved and miserable. Even during our duties together, I didn’t want to look at her. I was filled with jealousy, and corrupt dispositions really took hold of my heart at that time.

After that, I couldn’t feel the work and guidance of the Holy Spirit in my duties. When I encountered some problems, I couldn’t understand their essence and I didn’t know how to resolve them. I was also ineffective in my duties. I didn’t realize at all that my negative state was already impacting my duties. That was until I saw these words of God at a gathering: **“As a church leader, you do not merely need to learn to use the truth to resolve problems, you also need to learn to discover and cultivate people of talent, whom you absolutely must not envy or suppress. Practicing in this way is beneficial to the work of the church. If you can cultivate a few pursuers of the truth to cooperate with you and do all the work well, and in the end, you all have experiential testimonies, then you are a qualified leader or worker. If you are able to handle everything according to the principles, then you are committing your devotion. Some people always fear that others are better than they are**

or above them, that other people will be recognized while they get overlooked, and this leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being envious of people with talent? Is that not selfish and contemptible? What kind of disposition is this? It is maliciousness! Those who only think about their own interests, who only satisfy their own selfish desires, without thinking about others or considering the interests of God's house, have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them. If you are truly capable of showing consideration for God's will, you will be able to treat other people fairly. If you recommend a good person and allow them to undergo training and fulfill a duty, thereby adding a person of talent to God's house, will that not make your work easier? Will you not then be showing devotion in your duty? That is a good deed before God; it is the minimum conscience and sense that those who serve as leaders should possess" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). After reading God's word, I realized that I performed my duty for reputation and status, to make people look up to and adore me. When Claire came to the church and I saw that she could fellowship on the truth and solve problems, and that others would seek her out for fellowship instead of me, I became jealous and feared Claire would take my place, so I began to compete with her at every turn, exerting great effort to make up for my shortcomings in my attempts to surpass her. When the church needed to elect a gospel deacon, I could clearly see that Claire could take on this work, but I feared she would steal my status, so I didn't want to choose her, and I hated and despised her in my heart. I was happy when I saw her reveal corruption, and bore malicious intention when it came time to write her evaluation. I wanted to write all about her shortcomings and have her sent away, so that I wouldn't have to be afraid of the brothers and sisters looking

up to her. Through the revelations in God's word, I realized that I was jealous of her ability and couldn't bear her being better than me, and what I exposed was a vicious disposition. Outwardly, I was actively performing my duty, but in my heart, I didn't consider the work of the church whatsoever. Claire was good at the gospel work, and I should have partnered with her to make the gospel work more effective. However, I only thought of how to be better than her, how to get her to leave, and how to protect my own status. God examines our hearts and our attitudes toward our duties. I performed my duty without fear of God, and I only cared about pursuing name, gain, and status. God detests and is disgusted by this behavior.

Later, I read another passage of God's word: **"When it comes to anything that involves reputation, status, or an opportunity to shine—when you hear that the house of God plans to nurture various kinds of talented individuals, for example—every one of your hearts leaps in anticipation, each of you always wants to make a name for yourself and to step into the spotlight. You all want to fight for status and reputation. You are ashamed of this, but you would feel bad if you don't do so. You feel envy, hatred, and resentment whenever you see someone stand out, and think that it is unfair: 'Why can't I stand out? Why do other people always get the spotlight? Why is it never my turn?'** And after you feel resentment, you try to repress it, but you cannot. You pray to God and feel better for a while, but when you encounter this sort of situation again, you still cannot overcome it. Is this not a manifestation of an immature stature? When people are caught in such states, have they not fallen into Satan's trap? These are the shackles of Satan's corrupt nature that bind humans" (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting

Off One's Corrupt Disposition). God's word revealed my state. I was jealous of my sister because I had an intense desire for name and status, and because I wanted to stand out from the crowd and have a place in people's hearts. I remembered, in college, to gain praise and admiration from others, I competed with my classmates, and as long as there was a possibility of standing out, it didn't matter if I would hurt them. After I believed in God, I once again engaged in the same kind of pursuit within the church. When I saw that Claire was better than me, I wanted very much to surpass her because I wanted to get more people's praise and ambitiously hoped to be admired and adored by people, which showed how arrogant I was. I was always pursuing reputation and status, so I could not get the work of the Holy Spirit in my duties, and was falling into darkness. These were the shackles of Satan's corrupt nature that bound and harmed me. Later, I saw another passage of God's word that helped me understand a little of the essence and consequences of pursuing name, gain, and status. God says: **"Some people believe in God but do not pursue the truth. They always live by the flesh, coveting fleshly pleasures, always sating their own selfish desires. No matter how many years they believe in God, they will never enter into the truth reality. This is the mark of having brought shame to God. You say, 'I haven't done anything to resist God. How have I brought shame upon Him?' All of your ideas and thoughts are evil. The intents, goals, and motives behind what you do, and the consequences of your actions always satisfy Satan, make you its laughingstock, and allow it to get something on you. You have borne none of the testimony that a Christian should. You are of Satan. You bring shame to God's name in all things and you do not possess genuine testimony. Will God remember the things that you have done? In the end, what conclusion will God draw about all of your actions, behavior,**

and the duties that you have performed? Does something not have to come of that, some sort of statement? In the Bible, the Lord Jesus says, ‘Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and in Your name have cast out devils, and in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity’ (Matthew 7:22–23). Why did the Lord Jesus say this? Why did so many of those who preached, cast out demons, and performed many miracles in the name of the Lord become evildoers? It was because they did not accept the truths expressed by the Lord Jesus, they did not keep to His commandments, and they had no love for the truth in their hearts. They only wanted to exchange the work they had done, the hardships they had endured, and the sacrifices they had made for the Lord for the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. In this, they were attempting to strike a deal with God, and they were trying to use God and trick God, so the Lord Jesus felt sick of them, hated them, and condemned them as evildoers. Today, people are accepting the judgment and chastisement of God’s words, but some still pursue reputation and status, and always wish to distinguish themselves, always wanting to be leaders and workers and to gain reputation and status. Although they all say that they believe in God and follow God, and they renounce and expend for God, they perform their duties to gain prestige, profit, and status, and they always have their own schemes. They are not obedient or devoted to God, they can run amok doing evil without reflecting on themselves at all, and so they become evildoers. God hates these evildoers, and God does not save them” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). After reading God’s words, I felt ashamed. My ideas, thoughts,

intentions, and motivations weren't to satisfy God at all, they were entirely to make others admire me. When I saw my brothers and sisters pay more attention to Claire than me, I felt jealous, I competed with her, I wanted to surpass her, and even hoped she would be transferred to another church. As a church leader, I wasn't focused on cultivating people, or on doing church work well; instead, I was neglecting my duty, jealous of talent, and vying for name and gain. I was the same as the evildoers condemned by the Lord Jesus. The effort they expended was to maintain their reputation and status and to make others look up to them. I was the same. The effort I expended was also to earn praise from my brothers and sisters and to earn reputation and status. While I was busy showing off, my intentions in my duty were no longer correct, which made it impossible for me to gain the work of the Holy Spirit. There was no light in my fellowship, and I couldn't solve problems for the brothers and sisters. Now I understood that pursuing name, gain and status is really an evil thing, and it is something that God despises. The Lord Jesus said: **"Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and in Your name have cast out devils, and in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity"** (Matthew 7:22–23). God hates those who outwardly seem to travel and suffer for God, but who actually only work to satisfy their own intentions and motives. What they do is for their own benefit. It isn't to testify or satisfy God at all. This is the reason why they have done so much work, yet God doesn't recognize it. I saw myself doing the same. I was outwardly performing my duties, but I didn't seek the truth or try to reflect and know myself, and I didn't try to learn from the strengths of my partners. Instead, I took the wrong path of pursuing reputation and status, so I was no different from those evildoers. I thought about how Paul expended and

suffered so much purely to make others look up to him and worship him. He often exalted himself and showed off how much he had suffered and how much he had run around, saying that he was “no less than the greatest of disciples,” even to the point of saying he was Christ as he lived. His work and speech never paid testimony to God, it was testifying himself. This has led to people looking up to him and adoring him still two thousand years later, even to the point of treating his words as the words of God. In the end, God punished him for offending His disposition. If I kept pursuing name, gain, and status, and for others to look up to me in my duties, I would unconsciously become like Paul, walk a wrong path, become an evil person, and be rejected and eliminated by God. Once I realized this, I prayed to God: “Almighty God, I don’t want to let my corrupt disposition get in the way of my duty, I want to resolve my corrupt disposition and work well with my sister to fulfill my duty. Please guide me so that I can solve this problem.”

One time, I read a passage of God’s word: **“Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; do not consider the interests of man, and give no thought to your own pride, reputation, and status. You must first consider the interests of God’s house, and make them your priority. You should be considerate of God’s will and begin by contemplating whether or not there have been impurities in the performance of your duty, whether you have been devoted, fulfilled your responsibilities, and given it your all, as well as whether or not you have been wholeheartedly thinking about your duty and the work of the church. You must consider these things. If you think about them frequently and figure them out, it will be easier for you to perform your duty well. If you are of poor caliber, if your experience is shallow, or if you are not proficient in your professional**

work, then there may be some mistakes or deficiencies in your work, and you may not get good results—but you will have done your best. You do not satisfy your own selfish desires or preferences. Instead, you give constant consideration to the work of the church and the interests of the house of God. Though you may not achieve good results in your duty, your heart will have been set straight; if, on top of this, you can seek the truth to solve the problems in your duty, you will be up to standard in the performance of your duty, and, at the same time, you will be able to enter into the truth reality. This is what it means to possess testimony” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). From God’s word I found a path of practice. We shouldn’t do our duties before others, so that they praise and admire us. We should instead put aside our reputation and status, and consider the interests of the church, and put our duties first. This accords with God’s will. Claire did gospel work well and was responsible in her duties. I shouldn’t have been jealous of her. I should learn from her strengths to make up for my shortcomings and cooperate with her to fulfill our duty properly.

Once, I wanted to preach the gospel to my cousin, but he had many religious notions. I worried my fellowship wouldn’t be clear, and that I wouldn’t be able to solve his problem, so I wanted to find a sister to partner with me. I thought of how good Claire was at preaching the gospel, and that it would be suitable to find her, but I hesitated. I thought, “If I take her as my partner, doesn’t that prove I’m inferior to her? That I can’t testify God’s work or resolve religious notions? If my brothers and sisters found out, would they look down on me? If Claire resolved my cousin’s notions, my brothers and sisters would definitely look up to her even more.” When I had that thought, I realized that I was competing with her again for name and

gain, so I silently prayed to God. Later, I recalled a passage of God's word: **"You must learn to let go and set these things aside, to recommend others, and to allow them to stand out. Do not struggle or rush to take advantage of opportunities to stand out and shine. You must be able to put these things aside, but you must also not hold up the performance of your duty. Be a person who works in quiet obscurity and does not show off to others while you devotedly perform your duty. The more you let go of your pride and status, and the more you let go of your interests, the more at peace you will feel, the more light there will be in your heart, and the more your state will improve. The more you struggle and compete, the darker your state will become. If you do not believe Me, try it and see!"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). God's word enlightened me. I had to put down my pride and status, and take the initiative to cooperate with her. Practicing like this would benefit my duties. If I remained jealous of her and continued to compete with her for name and gain, my state would only become more negative and dark, because pursuing name and status is the path of Satan. I therefore prayed to God, "Almighty God, I have a corrupt disposition. I am jealous of my sister, and compete with her for name and gain, but I am willing to forsake the flesh and cast aside myself to partner with the sister so that I may practice the truth to satisfy You." After I prayed, I felt more relaxed, and went to Claire to explain the situation. She agreed immediately and discussed with me how we should partner and testify God's work in the last days to my cousin. I thought of how I had been jealous of Claire because of reputation and status, and how I had pretended to get along with her, but she never knew my real thoughts. So, I decided to open up to Claire. After dinner, I came clean with Claire, and fellowshiped about all the corruption I exposed and

my realizations from self-reflection in that time. After hearing this, she said, “It’s fine. I’m also very corrupt in this regard. Opening up like this is very good.” After I opened up, I felt quite relieved. Now I can harmoniously perform my duties with Claire, and I feel a deep sense of security and release. Thanks be to Almighty God!

13. I Know the Way to Resolve Corrupt Disposition

By Ramses, Mexico

I grew up in a Catholic family, and I believed in the Lord along with them since I was little. As I grew up, I came to realize that some believers just went to church on Sundays, but still regularly smoked, drank, and partied just like the unbelievers. I felt like they weren't following the Lord's requirements, that they were sinning. I often lived in sin, too. I lied, lost my temper, and got jealous. Even if I did confess my sins to the priest, I just couldn't escape that cycle of sinning, confessing, and sinning again. I felt totally at a loss. So I decided to leave our church and join another church to seek the path to escaping sin.

Later on, while working, I met Brother Raul, a longtime Christian. He said he'd been to many different churches, but he'd stopped attending because the pastors' sermons weren't insightful, and they were always asking for offerings. They were only interested in money, and when the brothers and sisters wanted their help with some sort of problem, they would just say, "Go ask the preacher first, and let me know if you still can't figure it out." I was really confused by that. Why would things like that happen in a church? After that I went to five or six other Christian churches and saw they were exactly like what Brother Raul had described. I remembered in one service some believers were playing a game of chess and holding a banquet. I saw the churches didn't have the Holy Spirit's work, and seemed more like entertainment venues for religious people. I didn't want to go to church anymore. But I recalled that the Bible says: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day

approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). So I felt really lost. Where should I go to attend assembly? There are over 1,000 Christian denominations, so finding one that truly had God’s guidance and the Holy Spirit’s work would be extremely hard. Brother Raul didn’t know where to go, either. So we decided to leave our congregation and use our free time to study the Bible. We read the Bible a lot together and shared our understanding, helping and supporting each other.

Several years went by that way, and although I was praying and reading the Scripture every day, what really frustrated me was that when something I didn’t like happened, or my interests were compromised, I still couldn’t control my anger. Sometimes when working together with Brother Raul, if he asked me to do something and I didn’t entirely understand him, he’d speak to me rather harshly, and I’d get really mad. I was thinking it was clear that he didn’t communicate well, but he was yelling at me, treating me like an idiot, and I didn’t have to take that. So I’d yell right back at him. We’d get really amped up and couldn’t rein in our anger whatsoever. In the end, all we could do was storm off. I wasn’t willing to listen to him or explain things to him. But after calming down, we would acknowledge our wrongs, and apologize to each other. I knew I hadn’t freed myself from sin, that I’d just keep sinning and rebelling against God, so I prayed and confessed to God, and I wanted to rein myself in. But no matter how hard I tried, I’d just keep messing up, sinning by day, confessing by night. I’d sunken into misery and guilt within this relentless cycle, and I was so disappointed in myself. I was asking myself why I couldn’t stop sinning. Brother Raul and I had talked about that plenty of times and we knew we just couldn’t help ourselves, that our self-righteousness, arrogance, and self-importance were glaring, and that we hadn’t escaped the bondage of sin.

Once, when we were studying the Bible together, we saw God's words: **"You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy"** (Leviticus 11:45). **"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord"** (Hebrews 12:14). These verses gave us pause for thought. The Lord told us we must be holy, yet we were living in sin. How could we achieve holiness? We didn't have a path. I asked a pastor about it, and he told me, "As long as we're living in the flesh, we'll never achieve holiness. But the Lord Jesus redeemed us of our sins. Our sins have already been forgiven, and the Lord doesn't see us as being of sin. When He comes down on a cloud, He'll take us up into the kingdom of heaven." This was rather comforting for me to hear, but I was still confused: The Lord is holy, yet right now we're always living in sin. Will He really take us into His kingdom when He returns?

One day in July 2019, Brother Raul and I were having one of our regular Bible studies. We did a web search for "the Bible," and found a movie by The Church of Almighty God, called Caught the Last Train. After watching the movie, I was really surprised. It was a great movie and the truths fellowshiped in it were really enlightening, especially the part where a sister says, "The Lord Jesus did the work of redemption. He simply forgave people's sins, but He didn't resolve our sinful nature, so we keep sinning and resisting God. Looking at those who believe in the Lord, from clergy down to regular believers, which of them can claim to be free from sin? Not a single one. Without a single exception, humans are bound and constrained by sin. We are full of arrogance, cunning, and greed. We can't help but sin even when we don't want to. Some may seem humble and gentle, but their hearts are full of corruption. We're not the people who do God's will, and we are not qualified to enter the kingdom of heaven. That's why God needs to continue His work to save humankind in the last days according to His plan, to do a stage of judgment work on the foundation of

the forgiveness of sins to cleanse and fully save us so we can escape sin and become pure, then enter God's kingdom and gain eternal life." Everything said in the movie was true. I was really excited, because I'd never heard anything like it. How were they able to share so much novel enlightenment? Where did they get it from? I saw they were reading a book called **The Word Appears in the Flesh**. Its content was full of power and authority, and things I'd never heard before. I really wanted to look into it further. After the movie, we reached out to The Church of Almighty God and started attending online gatherings, reading and fellowshiping Almighty God's words.

One day, I read this in Almighty God's words: **"Before man was redeemed, many of Satan's poisons had already been planted within him and, after thousands of years of being corrupted by Satan, he has within him an established nature that resists God. Therefore, when man has been redeemed, it is nothing more than a case of redemption in which man is bought at a high price, but the poisonous nature within him has not been eliminated. Man that is so defiled must undergo a change before becoming worthy to serve God. By means of this work of judgment and chastisement, man will fully come to know the filthy and corrupt essence within his own self, and he will be able to change completely and become clean. Only in this way can man become worthy to return before the throne of God. All the work done this day is so that man can be made clean and be changed; through judgment and chastisement by the word, as well as through refinement, man can purge away his corruption and be made pure. Rather than deeming this stage of work to be that of salvation, it would be more apt to say it is the work of purification. In truth, this stage is that of conquest as well as the second stage in the work of salvation"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. The Mystery of the Incarnation (4)). **“Christ of the last days uses a variety of truths to teach man, to expose the substance of man, and to dissect the words and deeds of man. These words comprise various truths, such as man’s duty, how man should obey God, how man should be loyal to God, how man ought to live out normal humanity, as well as the wisdom and the disposition of God, and so on. These words are all directed at the substance of man and his corrupt disposition. In particular, the words that expose how man spurns God are spoken in regard to how man is an embodiment of Satan, and an enemy force against God. In undertaking His work of judgment, God does not simply make clear the nature of man with a few words; He exposes, deals with, and prunes over the long term. All these different methods of exposure, dealing, and pruning cannot be substituted with ordinary words, but with the truth of which man is utterly bereft. Only methods such as these can be called judgment; only through judgment of this kind can man be subdued and thoroughly convinced about God, and moreover gain true knowledge of God. What the work of judgment brings about is man’s understanding of the true face of God and the truth about his own rebelliousness. The work of judgment allows man to gain much understanding of the will of God, of the purpose of God’s work, and of the mysteries that are incomprehensible to him. It also allows man to recognize and know his corrupt essence and the roots of his corruption, as well as to discover the ugliness of man. These effects are all brought about by the work of judgment, for the essence of this work is actually the work of opening up the truth, the way, and the life of God to all those who have faith in Him. This work is the work of judgment done by God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Christ Does the Work of Judgment With the Truth). After reading God’s words, I saw that the

Lord Jesus had done the work of redemption, which was just redeeming us so we were no longer of sin, but humankind's sinful nature wasn't removed. That's why we keep lying and sinning, and revealing corruption. Thinking about it, I realized that it was true. Every time I lost my cool, I'd regret it later. But whenever something I didn't like happened, I still couldn't help but lose my temper. I realized that if I didn't resolve my sinful nature, I'd never be free from sin, and then I'd be against God in thought, word, and deed. From Almighty God's words, I also saw that in the last days God has expressed the truth to expose and cleanse humankind. Full of curiosity about God's work of judgment, I later read much more of Almighty God's words, and saw that He reveals everything about humankind's sinful nature. He shows us how Satan corrupts people, how we can escape sin and be cleansed, who can enter the kingdom of heaven, who will be punished, and the outcomes of different types of people. God's words judging and exposing humankind contain His love and salvation. No matter how harsh He sounds, it's all so we can understand the truth, so we can clearly see the truth of how Satan has corrupted us, genuinely despise ourselves, then repent and change. Upon becoming aware of all this, I was filled with joy, and I was longing for more of Almighty God's words. I was also greatly enjoying attending gatherings and fellowshiping on God's words with brothers and sisters, and hoped that I could experience the judgment and chastisement of God's words so that I could resolve my corrupt disposition.

Later, I was elected as a church leader. Once, a sister sought me out for some help with problems she'd encountered while fulfilling her duty, and I gave her some advice on what she should do. After she and another sister heard my advice, they agreed to act accordingly. At this time, a leader called us and the two sisters asked me to share my ideas with her, too. After I'd explained it, the leader said nothing, and just gave us a document to

review, then told us how we should do it. I was a little annoyed. I felt like she hadn't really understood what I'd meant. I'd already discussed with those two sisters what to do, and spent so much time thinking over how the duty should be carried out. Was all my hard work really for nothing? I impatiently said to the leader, "Did you understand what I said? We've already agreed on this and we have a mutual understanding." The leader told me, "The solution you've suggested is okay, but it won't be very efficient." Then she told us about a faster and simpler way to get that duty done. I indeed thought her solution was a good one, but I wasn't all that pleased. I was wondering what the two sisters would think of me if the approach I'd spent so much time thinking of wasn't used. Would they think I was really useless and couldn't even arrange a little work? That would be so embarrassing. I felt worse the more I thought about it. Later, the leader asked me to do the duty with those two sisters. I was really resistant to it and didn't speak to her very kindly. Later, I did complete the duty, yet throughout the process I'd shown corruption in it that left me feeling unsettled and guilty. Afterward, I thought to myself that the leader was taking responsibility and offering some good suggestions to improve our work efficiency. This was good for the work of the church. But I couldn't accept it, and even got angry about it. I asked myself why I couldn't accept suitable opinions and they even made me angry. I needed to find the root of it, so I could be free of this state as soon as possible.

That evening, I searched the church website for passages in God's words about anger, and I found this one: **"Once a man has status, he will often find it difficult to control his mood, and so he will enjoy seizing upon opportunities to express his dissatisfaction and vent his emotions; he will often flare up in rage for no apparent reason, so as to reveal his ability and let others know that his status and identity are different**

from those of ordinary people. Of course, corrupt people without any status also often lose control. Their anger is frequently caused by damage to their private interests. In order to protect their own status and dignity, they will frequently vent their emotions and reveal their arrogant nature. Man will flare up in anger and vent his emotions in order to defend and uphold the existence of sin, and these actions are the ways in which man expresses his dissatisfaction; they brim with impurities, with schemes and intrigues, with man's corruption and evil, and more than anything else, they brim with man's wild ambitions and desires" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II). After reading God's words I saw that there's a reason humans tend to flare up. When our interests or reputation are compromised, we often vent our dissatisfaction, show our tempers, and lack normal human reason. What we show are satanic dispositions, negative things. Reflecting on myself in light of God's words, I saw that when my ideas were rejected, I became very resistant. I clearly knew the leader's approach was better than mine, that it would be quick and simple, but I still felt angry and worried that the others would think I was really useless. So I spoke unkindly to the leader. At that point I saw I was really arrogant, and was too focused on my name and status. I had always felt like my view was great, and I didn't want to listen to others. I didn't consider what would benefit the work of the church whatsoever. I saw I was arrogant beyond all reason, and even had so much trouble accepting sound advice. Upon realizing that, I was filled with remorse. I prayed to God to repent, asking Him to guide me to know myself better and get rid of my arrogance.

Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"There are many kinds of corrupt dispositions that are included within the disposition of Satan, but the one that is most obvious and that stands out the most is**

an arrogant disposition. Arrogance is the root of man's corrupt disposition. The more arrogant people are, the more irrational they are, and the more irrational they are, the more liable they are to resist God. How serious is this problem? Not only do people with an arrogant disposition consider everyone else beneath them, but, worst of all, they are even condescending toward God, and they have no God-fearing hearts. Even though people might appear to believe in God and follow Him, they do not treat Him as God at all. They always feel that they possess the truth and think the world of themselves. This is the essence and root of the arrogant disposition, and it comes from Satan. Therefore, the problem of arrogance must be resolved. Feeling that one is better than others—that is a trivial matter. The critical issue is that one's arrogant disposition prevents one from submitting to God, His rule, and His arrangements; such a person always feels inclined to compete with God for power and control others. This sort of person does not have a God-fearing heart in the slightest, to say nothing of loving God or submitting to Him. People who are arrogant and conceited, especially those who are so arrogant as to have lost their sense, cannot submit to God in their belief in Him, and even exalt and bear testimony for themselves. Such people resist God the most and have absolutely no God-fearing hearts. If people wish to get to where they have God-fearing hearts, then they must first resolve their arrogant disposition. The more thoroughly you resolve your arrogant disposition, the more you will have a God-fearing heart, and only then can you submit to Him and obtain the truth and know Him. Only those who gain the truth are genuinely human” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). I gave this passage some thought, and realized the reason that I couldn't handle others' suggestions appropriately was

because I had an arrogant disposition. I wanted other people to listen to me, but I wasn't willing to accept or hear others' advice. When I was working with Brother Raul, that's how I was. Since I'd been so arrogant, I wasn't willing to follow his instructions, much less could I stand him speaking to me with such a harsh tone. And in my interactions with my wife or others in daily life, I always thought I had the best ideas, that I was right, so they should listen to me and do what I said. After gaining my faith and taking on a duty with brothers and sisters, I continued living in arrogance and didn't want to accept other people's suggestions. Even when I knew my approach wasn't great, I still wanted to do things my way and have others listen to me. I was so arrogant I had no rationality to speak of. Due to my arrogant nature, I couldn't look at things rationally. I felt like I was always right, but oftentimes other people actually did have better ideas and a more comprehensive view than mine. For example, always thinking I was in the right, oftentimes I'd have my wife do things according to my plan, but it turned out badly. This time it was the same. The approach the leader suggested was simple, saved time, and could get better results, while the approach I had fellowshipped with the two sisters on was complicated and also time-consuming. The facts showed me I had no reason to be so arrogant. I should be down-to-earth, low-key, and know my place. If I kept living in such arrogance, I'd end up like the archangel, having no regard for God, resisting Him and offending His disposition, for which He'd punish and curse me. Upon realizing this, I quickly said a prayer to God: "God, I don't want to live by my arrogant disposition anymore. I want to live out normal humanity, listen to the brothers' and sisters' suggestions in my duty, work well with them, and do my duty to satisfy Your will."

I read a couple more passages of God's words after that: "**An arrogant nature makes you willful. If you have an arrogant nature, you will**

behave arbitrarily and rashly, heedless of what anyone says. How, then, do you resolve your arbitrariness and rashness? Say, for example, something happens to you and you have your own ideas and plans. Before determining what to do, you must seek the truth, and you should at least fellowship with everyone about what you think and believe about that matter, asking everyone to tell you if your thoughts are correct and in line with the truth, and to carry out checks for you. This is the best method for solving arbitrariness and rashness. First, you can shed light on your views and seek the truth—this is the first step of practice for solving arbitrariness and rashness. The second step happens when other people voice dissenting opinions—how can you practice in order to keep from being arbitrary and rash? You must first have an attitude of humility, set aside what you believe to be right, and let everyone fellowship. Even if you believe your way to be correct, you should not keep insisting on it. That is a kind of step forward; it shows an attitude of seeking the truth, of denying yourself, and of satisfying God’s will. Once you have this attitude, at the same time as not adhering to your own opinions, you should pray, seek the truth from God, and then look for a basis in God’s words—determine how to act based on God’s words. This is the most suitable and accurate practice”

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). “The hardest problem for corrupt mankind to fix is that of making the same old mistakes. To prevent this, people must first be aware that they have yet to obtain the truth, that there has not been a change in their life disposition, and that although they believe in God, they still live under the power of Satan, and have not been saved; they are liable to betray God and stray from God at any time. If they have this sense of crisis in their hearts—if, as people often say, they are prepared for danger in

times of peace—then they will be able to hold themselves in check somewhat, and when something does happen to them, they will pray to God and depend on Him, and will be able to avoid making the same old mistakes. You must see clearly that your disposition has not changed, that the nature of betrayal against God is still deeply rooted in you and has not been expelled, that you are still at risk of betraying God, and that you face the constant possibility of suffering perdition and being destroyed. This is real, so you must be careful. There are three most important points to keep in mind: First, you still don't know God; second, there have not been any changes in your disposition; and third, you have yet to live out the true image of man. These three things are in line with the facts, they are real, and you must be clear about them. You must be self-aware. If you have the will to fix this problem, then you should choose your own motto: For example, 'I am the dung upon the ground,' or 'I am the devil,' or 'I often fall into my old ways,' or 'I'm always in danger.' Any one of these is fit to serve as your personal motto, and it will help if you remind yourself of it at all times. Keep repeating it to yourself, reflect on it, and you may well be able to make fewer mistakes, or stop making mistakes. Nevertheless, what is most important is to spend more time reading God's words, to understand the truth, to know your own nature, and to escape your corrupt disposition. Only then will you be safe" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). God's words helped me understand that to resolve my arrogance, I have to learn to cooperate with others, to seek and fellowship. I should share my thoughts with the brothers and sisters in work discussions, and humbly seek others' opinions. Regardless of whether they're different from what I suggest, I should put aside what I think is right. I should pray and seek based on what

others have said and let God guide and enlighten me to show me what's right, what's suitable, and show me my own shortcomings and flaws. Even when I think what I say is right, I can't cling to my own ideas, I must seek the truth, and seek the will of God. And when I see that someone else has a better, more correct idea than me, I should learn to put myself aside and accept what they say. That's in line with God's will and keeps me from making mistakes. On top of that, I wrote out a motto for myself about my arrogant nature: "I'm nothing but dung, and I must not be arrogant. I always put myself in danger with my lack of self-control." This helped me remember of the disgrace of my arrogant states, and reminded me of the danger and consequences of living in arrogance. After that, I started focusing on practicing God's words and listening to others' ideas. When someone offered a different suggestion or opinion from mine, either at home or in a duty with brothers and sisters in the church, I started putting my ego aside. I saw that other people really did have more comprehensive ideas than me, and I learned to accept their ideas from the heart and implement proper suggestions. After putting that into practice, I found that I lost my temper with the brothers and sisters less often and I could listen to and accept what other people had to say. I also felt so much more relaxed than before. I was grateful to God from the bottom of my heart!

Later on, I read another passage of God's words: **"People cannot change their own disposition; they must undergo the judgment and chastisement, and suffering and refinement, of God's words, or being dealt with, disciplined, and pruned by His words. Only then can they achieve obedience and faithfulness to God, and no longer be perfunctory toward Him. It is under the refinement of God's words that people's dispositions change. Only through the exposure, judgment, discipline, and dealing of His words will they no longer dare**

to act rashly but instead will become steady and composed. The most important point is that they are able to submit to God's current words, and to His work, even if it is not in line with human notions, they are able to put these notions aside and willingly submit" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. People Whose Dispositions Have Changed Are Those Who Have Entered Into the Reality of God's Words). Almighty God's words showed me that we can't rely on our own strength or perseverance to control or change our dispositions. All that effort at self-control can just change some behaviors, and those changes won't last very long. If we want to undergo true dispositional change, we have to accept the judgment and chastisement of God's words, dealing and pruning, chastening and discipline, as well as trials and refinement. That's the only way to truly know our satanic nature and clearly see the dangerous consequences of living by our satanic dispositions. Then we can truly hate and forsake ourselves, and achieve genuine repentance and change.

I'm grateful for Almighty God giving me the chance to experience His judgment and chastisement of the last days so I can learn truths, and come to know myself and resolve my corruption. I feel incredibly fortunate. I don't feel so lost and confused anymore, because Almighty God's words have revealed the root of our sin, and the manifestations of our various corrupt dispositions. He's also given us a path to cast off sin and achieve changes in life disposition. Almighty God's words are rich and plentiful, and give us all we need. They give us answers for all of our questions and difficulties. As long as we read and accept God's words from the heart, we can understand our corruption and rebelliousness, and find the path to resolving our corrupt disposition. Thanks be to Almighty God!

14. Finally Free of Misunderstandings

By Lorraine, South Korea

A few years ago, I made videos in the church. There was a time when I didn't do my duty well, and two videos I produced were temporarily shelved due to problems with their ideas. At the time, I was very sad, because I feared my brothers and sisters would look down on me. To prove my competence, I worked very hard and spent a few days planning another video, but after reading the plan, the leader pointed out that the concept was outdated and unclear. After discussion, everyone felt the plan wasn't worth proceeding, so it was thrown out. I felt like a failure, I was in a negative state, and I had no energy to do my duty. One day, I accidentally found out some brothers and sisters said my mind was muddled. Hearing that, my heart immediately sank, and my mind was churning, "The leader said my thinking was unclear, and the brothers and sisters said that my mind is muddled. Doesn't that mean I'm a muddled person? Can muddled people understand the truth and be saved by God? Am I going to be cast out?" The thought made me feel very negative and tormented, and I wanted to escape the situation.

The next day, I cried and said to the leader and group leader, "My caliber is too low, and this duty is so hard. Please let me do another duty." My leader fellowshiped with me, saying, "We all have shortcomings, and there will inevitably be some setbacks and failures in our duties. If there are any problems or deviations, we have to go over them, seek the truth to resolve the problems, and then keep making an effort. This duty isn't necessarily impossible for you." But at the time, it didn't register with me, and I just wanted to leave. And so, I left with a misunderstanding of God and estrangement from my brothers and sisters. Later, I began to practice

preaching the gospel. After a period of hard work, I became more and more effective in my duty, and the brothers and sisters in the group often asked me when they had any questions. I felt like I had regained some confidence, I was in a good mood every day, and I had energy to do my duty.

But unexpectedly, a year later, due to work needs, the leader arranged for me to make videos again. At the beginning, I was effective in my duty and wasn't constrained by anything. But later, when the video production needed innovation, my thinking was behind the times and my plans were always denied, and I found myself in a negative state again. I pegged myself as having low caliber, being muddled, and incapable of the duty. The group leader saw that I was relatively passive in my duty and bore no burden, so he patiently fellowshiped on the truth to me, supported and helped me, and said to me, "You and Brother Francis have been making videos for about the same amount of time. He is very earnest, good at studying and summarizing, and has made progress in his duty. You aren't doing as well, so you need to work hard." When I heard it, I was really uncomfortable. I thought, "You pointed out the problem in my duty, so I'll change it. But why are you comparing me to Francis? He has good caliber and clear thinking, and has always been a subject for cultivation. I'm all over the place. I'm not on the same level as him. There's no comparison." At the time, I was very resistant to the group leader's suggestions and help, and didn't reflect on myself. After about a week, the group leader found Sister Julie and I didn't work well together, so he fellowshiped with me, "You're partnered with Julie. She has a more flexible mind, and your technical skills are better, so you complement each other. You should discuss things more with her, listen to her opinions more, and learn from her strengths. That's how you make progress. Recently, the results of your duties haven't been good, and your ideas for videos are still outdated. Don't

you think you need to reflect on this?” I was very sad to hear my group leader expose my problems like this. I felt that he looked down on me and despised me. He pointed out my problems just a few days ago, and now, before I could recover, he was exposing me. The more I thought about it, the worse I felt, and I cried in frustration. I couldn’t help but say something that I still regret to this day. I said, “In the group, I feel superfluous. I’m not helping, but you still keep me around.” The group leader was very taken aback. He said, “How can you say such a thing? That’s not how anyone sees you! We have to seek the truth to solve problems in our duty. We can’t be negative and resist it.” But no matter how the group leader fellowshiped, it fell on deaf ears. I felt I was muddled, that God was displeased with me, that my brothers and sisters didn’t welcome me, and that I was a marginal and disposable figure in the group. The more I thought, the more wronged I felt, and I lived in a state of negativity and misunderstanding, my relationship with God was more estranged, and my confidence was increasingly lower. “My caliber is poor” became my mantra.

Later, while making a video with my partner, whenever she had a different viewpoint in the discussion, I compromised and said, “My caliber is poor and my ideas aren’t good. You see the problem accurately, so just follow your ideas.” Then, I deleted my own proposal. My partner became anxious when she saw this, “Why did you delete it? I have a lot of shortcomings, and I don’t necessarily see problems accurately either.” Later, she came to talk to me about her state. She said she had an arrogant disposition in her work with me, and she looked down on me a little, and had to reflect on herself. After hearing her say that, outwardly I was calm, but I felt very tormented, and didn’t want to talk in-depth with her, so I forced myself to say, “You can be forgiven for showing arrogance. Who wouldn’t, when doing their duty with someone of poor caliber like me? If I

were you, I'd do the same." At the time, she felt at a loss and didn't know what to say to me. And so, I lived in a state of negativity and misunderstanding. My heart was tormented and suffering, and it was very difficult to do my duty. Especially after finishing a video, when we needed to explain the idea behind the video and ask everyone to make comments, I rarely spoke, and didn't dare participate in discussions, so I looked to my partner on such occasions. When I couldn't sleep at night, I thought, "Why do I always hold myself back during my duty and have no confidence? Why am I always afraid of being looked down on? Why is life such a torment for me?" I didn't want to be depressed like this anymore. I wanted to live in a positive state like others, and be able to perform my duties normally, but I just couldn't get rid of this negative state. All I could do was cry out to God to save me and help me escape this predicament.

Not long after, at a gathering, I heard the leader read a passage of God's words that made me realize my problem and turn my state around. God says: **"When people stray far from God, when they live in a state in which they misinterpret God, or resist, oppose God, and argue back with God, then they have totally left the care and protection of God, they have completely departed from the light of God's presence. When people live in a state such as this, they can't help but live by their own feelings. Some small thought can so perturb you that you can't eat or sleep, a careless comment from someone can plunge you into doubt and bewilderment, even a single nightmare can make you negative and cause you to misinterpret God. Once this kind of vicious circle has taken shape, people determine that it's over for them, that they have lost all hope of being saved, that they have been forsaken by God, that God will not save them. The more they think in this way, and the more they have such feelings, the more they are plunged into negativity. The**

actual reason why people have these feelings is because they do not seek the truth or practice according to the truth principles. And because, when something happens to them, people do not seek the truth, and do not practice the truth, because they always go their own way, and live amid their own petty schemes, spending each day comparing themselves to others and competing with them, envying and hating anyone who is better than them, and jeering and mocking anyone who they think is below them, living in the disposition of Satan, not doing things according to the truth principles, and refusing to accept anybody's exhortations, this ends up leading to all kinds of delusion, speculation, and judgment, and they make themselves perpetually anxious. And is this not their own fault? Only people could laden themselves with such bitter fruit—and they truly deserve it. What causes all this? It is because people do not seek the truth, are too arrogant and self-righteous, they act according to their own inclinations, they are always showing off and comparing themselves to others, they are always trying to distinguish themselves, they always make unreasonable demands of God, and so on—all of these things cause people to gradually stray from God, to oppose God and defy the truth over and over again. Ultimately, they plunge themselves into darkness and negativity. And at such times, it is impossible for people to have a pure understanding of their own rebellion and resistance, much less is it possible for them to have the right attitude; instead, they complain about God, misunderstand God, try to second-guess God. When this happens, people finally realize their corruption is very deep and that they are too troublesome, so they determine that they are opposing God, and they can't help but be plunged into negativity, unable to pull themselves out. What they believe is, 'God detests and

rejects me, God doesn't want me. I'm too rebellious, I deserve it, God definitely will not save me anymore.' They believe that these are all facts, that these things are all true. They determine the things they have speculated upon in their hearts to be facts. No matter who fellowships the truth with them, it is of no use, they can't accept it. They think, 'God will not bless me, He will not save me, so what's the point in believing in God?' When the path of their belief in God has gotten to this point, are people still capable of believing? No. Why can they no longer go on? There is a fact here. When people's negativity reaches a certain point, when their hearts are filled with opposition and complaints, and they wish to sever all contact with God, then this is no longer as simple as them not fearing God, not obeying God, not loving the truth, and not accepting the truth. What is going on instead? In their hearts, they have made their own decision to give up their faith in God. They think it shameful to passively await being cast out, that there is more dignity in choosing to give up, and so they take the initiative and break things off by themselves. They condemn faith in God as being bad, they condemn the truth as being unable to change people, and they condemn God as unrighteous, asking—aggrieved—why God didn't save them: 'I made so many sacrifices, I was so earnest, I worked so hard, I suffered so much more than others, and tried so much harder than everyone else, and still God did not bless me. Now I see that God does not like me, that God is not impartial.' They have the gall to make their doubts about God into the condemnation and blasphemy of God. When such things take form, can they continue on the path of faith in God? Because they rebel against God and oppose God, and do not accept the truth or reflect on themselves at all, they have been forfeited'' (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The

Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (17)). It felt like every word God spoke was a reminder, an analysis, or even a warning to me, especially when God said: **“The actual reason why people have these feelings is because they do not seek the truth or practice according to the truth principles.”** Thinking about these words, I began to reflect on myself, and I finally discovered that after all this time, I never sought truth when encountering these situations, to say nothing of practicing according to the truth principles. I was living entirely within my own imagination and speculation. I recalled how when I repeatedly failed to make videos, and heard brothers and sisters comment that my mind was muddled, I didn’t reflect on my own problems; instead, I chose to escape and live in negativity and misunderstanding. When I started making videos again, I didn’t learn from past failures. Instead, I did my duty with a passive and defensive mentality. When I heard the group leader compliment others, then point out problems in my duty, I was even more negative. I felt I had poor caliber and was muddled. I suspected my brothers and sisters of looking down on me, and I misunderstood God even more, which led to more pain and darkness in my heart, and made me ineffective in my duty. I held myself back in everything and felt really constrained. Only then did I see clearly that there wasn’t a problem with the people and things around me, and God wasn’t not treating me favorably. I wasn’t seeking the truth, and always resisted, distanced myself from, and resented being chastened and disciplined, dealt with and pruned by God. My disobedience and resistance to God was too great, causing me to fall into darkness and pain, and making my relationship with God more estranged. Who but me was to blame when I didn’t do my duty well? I finally understood what it meant to “hold yourself back.” I saw something else clearly, which is that although I believed in God, and I forsook and expended, I didn’t truly accept the truth,

or acknowledge that the truth God expresses can save people. When I had failures and setbacks in my duty, I resisted, acted unreasonably, and pegged myself as having poor caliber. I even felt that God doesn't save people like me. I was often dissatisfied, and felt I could put up with hardship and make sacrifices in my duty; I suffered no less than others. So why was I always revealed to be so bad at it? Why wasn't God gracious to me? Wasn't I denying God's righteousness? This was blasphemy! The more I reflected, the more afraid I became. I felt that my state was far too dangerous. If I didn't turn things around and genuinely repent, I would definitely be cast out by God. Every state in God's analysis touched my heart. Seeing how serious my problem was, I cried very hard. I hated myself for not pursuing the truth, not accepting God's words, and harming myself. I felt deep remorse, so I prayed to God, "God, I don't want to be so rebellious and stubborn anymore, and I don't want to live in misunderstanding or hurt Your heart again. I want to repent!"

After that, the leader and group leader came to fellowship with me. They exposed and pointed out my tendency for negativity, and read God's word to me. I was very touched. Almighty God says: **"At every stage—whether when God is disciplining or correcting you, or when He is reminding and exhorting you—as long as a conflict has occurred between you and God, yet you do not make a turnaround, and continue to cling to your own ideas, viewpoints, and attitudes, then even though your steps are headed forward, the conflict between you and God, your misunderstandings of Him, your complaints and rebelliousness against Him are not rectified, and your heart does not turn around. Then God, for His part, will cast you out. Although you have not let go of the duty at hand, and you still keep to your duty and have a bit of loyalty for what God has commissioned, and people see this as acceptable, the**

dispute between you and God has formed a permanent knot. You have not used the truth to resolve it and gain a true understanding of God's will. As a result, your misunderstanding of God deepens, and you always think that God is in the wrong and you are being treated unjustly. This means you have not made a turnaround. Your rebellion, your notions, and your misunderstanding of God still persist, which leads you to have a disobedient mentality, to be always rebellious and oppose God. Is this kind of person not someone who rebels against God, resists God, and stubbornly refuses to repent? Why does God place such importance on people making a turnaround? With what attitude should a created being regard the Creator? An attitude that acknowledges that the Creator is right, no matter what He does. If you do not acknowledge this, that the Creator is the truth, the way, and the life will be but hollow words to you. If that is the case, can you still attain salvation? You cannot. You would be unqualified; God does not save people like you. ... You must make a turnaround and put aside your ideas and intentions. Once you have this intent, yours will naturally also be an attitude of submission. However, to speak a bit more precisely, this refers to people making a turnaround in their attitude toward God, the Creator; it is a recognition and affirmation of the fact that the Creator is the truth, the way, and the life. If you can turn yourself around, this demonstrates that you can put aside those things you think are right, or those things that mankind—which is corrupt—thinks collectively to be right; and, instead, you are acknowledging that God's words are the truth and positive things. If you can have this attitude, it proves your recognition of the identity of the Creator and of His essence. This is how God views the issue, and He therefore considers man's turnaround especially important" (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Resolving One's Notions Can One Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God (3)). As I contemplated God's word, I understood why God considers it so important for people to turn around. In God's work to save people, it doesn't matter how much work a person can do or how much suffering they withstand. What God looks at is people's hearts. He looks at whether they admit God is the truth, the way, and the life, and whether they obey God. If a person reveals much corruption and does things that go against the truth, but never reflects on their problems or accepts the truth, and always harbors misunderstandings of God, even if on the outside such a person can withstand suffering and make sacrifices, to God, they are still resisting and betraying God. In the end, such people will all be cast out, and cannot be saved. I considered how, over the years, I had always misunderstood God, and had reservations about Him, but I never resolved these issues. I merely numbed myself by busying myself with my duty. Once problems were exposed in my duty and it was revealed that I had many deficiencies and it hurt my ego, I labeled myself with negative words, and even said words of complaint or misunderstanding against God. As time went on, the resentment in my heart built up, my estrangement with God deepened, and my state became worse and worse. I couldn't help but ask myself, "Even though I busy myself with my duty every day, and have never done anything truly wicked, my heart is far away from God, and I am always holding Him off and misunderstanding Him. How could I be called a believer in God? Would God approve of belief like this? I often live in misunderstanding and negativity, and never feel release. Even while I do my duty, it is hard to receive the work of the Holy Spirit. I can only plod along by relying on my previous experience. How could I grow like that? What could I gain by believing in this way?" It was then that I clearly realized how important it is to get rid of misunderstandings about God and

have a genuinely repentant heart. These three years, I could never let go of how my brothers and sisters commented that my mind wasn't clear. I'd never sought the truth in this matter or reflected on myself in light of God's word. Now, I knew I had to seek the truth to resolve this problem.

So, I looked up relevant portions of God's word. God's words say: **"When God calls you a fool, He is not asking that you accept some statement, or word, or definition—He is asking that you understand the truth within this. So when God does call someone a fool, what truth is contained inside? Everyone understands the superficial meaning of the word 'fool.' But as for what the manifestations and dispositions of a fool are, which of the things that people do are foolish and which aren't, why God exposes people in this way, whether or not fools can come before God, whether or not fools are able to act according to principle, whether or not they are able to understand what is right and what is wrong, whether or not they are able to discern what is beloved by God and what is despised by God—most of the time, people are unclear about these things; to them they are ambiguous and ill-defined, utterly unapparent. For example: Most of the time people don't know—it is not clear to them—whether doing something in a certain way is simply following rules, or practicing the truth. Neither do they know—neither is it clear to them—whether something is beloved of God or despised by God. They do not know whether practicing a certain way is placing people in strictures, or fellowshiping the truth and helping people as normal. They don't know whether the principles behind the way they act toward people are correct, and whether they are trying to create allies, or to help people. They don't know whether acting in a certain way is abiding by principle and standing firm in their position, or being arrogant and self-righteous, and showing off. When they have**

nothing else to do, some people like staring at a mirror; they don't know whether this is narcissism and vanity, or if it is normal. Some people have a temper and are a little odd; can they tell whether this is related to them having a bad disposition? People can't even differentiate between these commonly seen, commonly encountered things—and yet they still say they have gained so much from believing in God. Is this not foolish? So can you accept being called a fool? (Yes.) ... And do you want to be fools your whole lives? (No.) No one wants to be a fool. In fact, fellowshiping and dissecting in this way is not to make you try to class yourself as a fool; no matter how God defines you, no matter what He reveals about you, how He judges and chastises you, or deals with and prunes you, the ultimate aim is to allow you to escape those states, understand the truth, gain the truth, and try not to be a fool. So what should you do if you wish not to be a fool? You must pursue the truth. First of all, you must know in what matters you are a fool, in what matters you are always preaching doctrine, always meandering about in theory and words and doctrines, and staring blankly when you are faced with the facts. When you solve these problems and are clear about each aspect of the truth, there will be fewer times when you are foolish. When you have a clear understanding of each truth, when you are not bound by hand and foot in all you do, when you are not bridled or constrained—when, once something happens to you, you are able to find the correct principles to practice and are truly able to act according to principle after praying to God, seeking the truth, or finding someone to fellowship with, then you will no longer be foolish. If something is clear to you, and you are able to correctly practice the truth, then you will not be foolish when it comes to that thing. People have but to understand the truth for their

hearts to naturally be enlightened” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). God explains the behavior of muddled people very clearly. Muddled people are confused and unclear in everything they do. They have no stance or principles, they don’t know what God likes or hates, and lack discernment about people and circumstances. They can’t clearly see their own deficiencies or the corruption they reveal. When things happen, they can’t tell right from wrong, and they have no principle or path of practice. As I applied God’s words, past scenes from my duty surfaced in my mind. I only focused on working hard, but never on reading God’s words, nor did I seek the truth principles. When my brothers and sisters gave me suggestions about editing videos, I didn’t give it much thought. Sometimes I didn’t even understand what they meant, and just did things blindly, thinking that suffering was loyalty to God. I revealed so much corruption and deficiency in my duty, but I didn’t come before God to seek the truth and solve the problem. Instead, I lived in a negative state for years, and was especially numb. I couldn’t see how serious my problem was or how dangerous it was to continue like this. I was always confused and muddled through each day. Aren’t these all behaviors of someone who’s muddled? Only then did I realize that what my brothers and sisters said about me was true. But I refused to admit it. I suspected that everyone looked down on me, and I felt prejudice and estrangement toward them. I really shouldn’t have done that! All these years, my brothers and sisters often supported and helped me, and they never looked down on me. I was the one who was outrageous, unreasonable, and unaccepting of the truth. Thinking of this, I could finally let go of the past. I hated myself deeply for being so confused and not seeking the truth. I despised myself for being so unreasonable.

Once I realized I was muddled, I thought of how I often defined myself as having poor caliber, too. This was another problem I should seek the truth to resolve. Later, I read a passage of God's words: **"If God made you foolish, then there is meaning in your foolishness; if He made you bright, then there is meaning in your brightness. Whatever talents God gives you, whatever your strengths, however high your IQ, they all have a purpose for God. All these things were preordained by God. The role you play in your life and the duty you fulfill were ordained by God long ago. Some people see that others possess strengths they do not and are discontent. They want to change things by learning more, seeing more, and being more diligent. But there is a limit to what their diligence can achieve, and they cannot surpass those with gifts and expertise. No matter how much you fight, it is useless. God has ordained what you will be, and there is nothing anyone can do to change it. Whatever you are good at, that is where you should make an effort. Whatever duty you are suited to is the duty you should perform. Do not try to force yourself into areas outside your skillset and do not envy others. Everyone has their function. Do not think that you can do everything well, or that you are more perfect or better than others, always desiring to replace others and put yourself on display. This is a corrupt disposition. There are those who think that they cannot do anything well, and that they have no skills at all. If that is the case, you should just be a person who listens and obeys in a down-to-earth manner. Do what you can and do it well, with all your strength. That is enough. God will be satisfied. Do not always think about surpassing everyone, doing everything better than others, and standing out from the crowd in every way. What kind of disposition is that? (An arrogant disposition.) People always possess an arrogant disposition, and even if**

they want to strive for the truth and satisfy God, they fall short. Being controlled by an arrogant disposition makes people the most liable to go astray. For example, there are some people who always want to show off by expressing their good intentions in place of God's requirements. Would God praise that kind of expression of good intentions? To be mindful of God's will, you must follow God's requirements, and to perform your duty, you must submit to God's arrangements. People who express good intentions are not mindful of God's will, but are instead always trying to play out new tricks and speaking lofty-sounding words. God does not ask that you be mindful in this way. Some people say that this is them being competitive. In and of itself, being competitive is something negative. It is a revelation—a manifestation—of the arrogant disposition of Satan. When you have a disposition like that, you are always trying to keep others down, always trying to get ahead of them, always jockeying, always trying to take from people. You are highly envious, you don't yield to anyone, and you are always trying to distinguish yourself from the crowd. This spells trouble; this is how Satan acts. If you truly wish to be an acceptable creature of God, then do not pursue your own dreams. Trying to be superior and more capable than you are in order to achieve your aims is bad. You should learn to submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, and not get above your station; only this demonstrates **sense**” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One's Conduct). God's words are so clear! Why did I keep saying my caliber was poor? Because actually, my nature was too arrogant. I always had ambitions and desires, wanting to be above others, and when I couldn't, I became negative, outrageous, and labeled myself. My desire for reputation and status was too strong. In any group, I feared being looked down on, and

always wanted to be looked up to. But actually, many of my own problems and deficiencies were showing. And when I experienced dealing, pruning, setbacks, and failures, I felt my image was damaged and my reputation discredited. I couldn't face it correctly, and thought my caliber was too low and that I was too confused. I also often compared myself to others. When I saw that others in the group had strengths and were of a better caliber than me, I felt untalented and unremarkable. I couldn't accept this reality, so I always felt depressed and inferior. Only then did I realize that what I wanted was prestige and status, so I compared my caliber and gifts to others' and always sought to be admired by others. My satanic disposition was very serious. Gifts and caliber are not the key to determining whether a person can perform their duty well. Being held in high esteem and worshiped by others is not a guarantee of salvation. God never said such a thing. God wants us to have humanity and be reasonable, pursue the truth in a down-to-earth manner, resolve our corrupt dispositions, and live out a human likeness. This is what God requires of people. I thought of what God says: **"It matters not whether I say you are backward or of poor caliber—this is all fact. My saying this does not prove that I intend to forsake you, that I have lost hope in you, much less that I am unwilling to save you. Today I have come to do the work of your salvation, which is to say that the work I do is a continuation of the work of salvation. Every person has the chance to be made perfect: Provided that you are willing, provided that you pursue, in the end you will be able to achieve this result, and not one of you will be forsaken"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Restoring the Normal Life of Man and Taking Him to a Wonderful Destination). God's words are very clear. Although God says people have poor caliber, and reveals that they are muddled, it is just to make them see their own problems and know their own shortcomings, so they can pursue the

truth well and have a change in their life disposition. We may have a low caliber, but as long as we love and pursue the truth, and strive to meet God's requirements, God will enlighten and guide us. But if our caliber is good, yet we don't pursue the truth, we will be revealed and cast out. It was a fact that my caliber was low, but God never said He wouldn't save me or would cast me out for it. He still gave me chances to do my duty. I should treasure them, pursue the truth, be active in progressing, make up for my shortcomings, and improve my caliber.

After that, when something happened, I focused on seeking the truth, and no matter the circumstances, no matter if it was dealing and pruning or setbacks and failures, I would focus on reflecting on myself, and seek the truth principles. When I experienced this way, I felt the presence of God before I knew it, and felt that my mind was clearer. When my brothers and sisters discussed ideas for videos, I didn't hold back anymore. Sometimes the views I expressed were wrong, or my brothers and sisters gave me suggestions, but I could face it correctly, and was calmer about it. During that time, I felt very close to God. I felt that God was by my side, giving me confidence and strength. Although there were many difficulties in my duty, by seeking God's will through prayer, relying on God, and cooperating with my brothers and sisters, finally, some problems were resolved, and the effectiveness of my duty also improved. I thank God from the bottom of my heart for saving me.

Thinking back now on when I misunderstood and was estranged from God, I felt a deep regret. Later, I read another passage of God's words, and was very moved. God's words say: **"I do not want to see anyone feeling as though God has left them out in the cold, that God has abandoned them or turned His back on them. All I want to see is everyone on the road to pursuing the truth and seeking to understand God, boldly**

marching onward with unfaltering determination, without any misgivings or burdens. No matter what wrongs you have committed, no matter how far you have strayed or how seriously you have transgressed, do not let these become burdens or excess baggage that you have to carry with you in your pursuit of understanding God. Continue marching onward. At all times, God holds man's salvation in His heart; this never changes. This is the most precious part of the essence of God" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). In my years of believing in God, I said God loves people, but I had no real knowledge of God's love. This experience gave me some real understanding and feeling of God's love. Although my heart was hard and rebellious, God arranged environments for me to experience. He waited for me to change, He awakened me with His words, and guided me out of my state of negativity and misunderstanding. God's desire to save people is so sincere and so beautiful! I am very grateful to God, and want nothing more than to pursue the truth well, do my duty well, and repay God's love.

15. Joy's Story

By Joy, the Philippines

In the past, I always treated people based on emotion. So long as people were nice to me, I would be nice to them. I had no discernment of people, and what's more, I had no principles. This was until I experienced some things that made me understand that the principles by which I got along with people and viewed others were incorrect.

In February of 2021, my good friend Emma invited me to a gathering of The Church of Almighty God. By reading the words of Almighty God and listening to the fellowship in gatherings, I made certain that Almighty God is the second coming of the Lord Jesus and happily accepted God's work in the last days. A few months later, I was chosen as the church's watering deacon.

One day, I noticed that in a gathering group, Emma was suddenly spreading rumors and fallacies that questioned God and attacked the church, as well as prejudices about the leaders and deacons. There was dissatisfaction and ridicule in her words. She also said these things weren't her own personal opinions, and that they were opinions from others, and she hoped that a meeting could be held for the leaders to answer these questions. I was shocked after reading about the fallacies and rumors Emma sent. At the same time, I was also worried, because all the people in that group were brothers and sisters who had just accepted God's work in the last days. Sending those kinds of messages to the group would definitely cause a disturbance, and it might even cause some with shallow foundations and no discernment to stumble. I felt very uneasy and I didn't know why Emma was doing this. If she really wanted answers to her questions, she could have sent them directly to the leader. Why was she spreading these

things among the newcomers? Soon, just as I had feared, the rumors Emma had been spreading generated confusion and disruption within the church, with some brothers and sisters being influenced, causing them to become prejudiced against the leaders and deacons and feel resistant. One of the group leaders asked me, “Are the things Emma said true?” Seeing this situation, I became even more agitated. So, I hurried to find Emma to ask where these rumors were coming from. Emma told me, “These aren’t questions I’ve brought up. I just want the leaders to hold a meeting to answer them.” I asked her again who had sent her these rumors, but Emma still didn’t say. I reported this matter to the leader, who also wanted to know who exactly had raised these questions to quickly solve the problem at the root. But Emma told her nothing. Later, after investigating, it was found that none of the other brothers and sisters had raised these questions, and that it was Emma herself who had notions about God’s work. She collected some rumors from the Internet and arranged them into questions, but she refused to admit it. After learning the truth of the matter, the leader quickly organized a gathering, and fellowshiped to answer each one of Emma’s rumors and fallacies, thereby giving the brothers and sisters discernment over the things Emma said. However, Emma herself had no awareness of or repentance for her own actions.

After this incident, the leader asked me, “What will you do if Emma isn’t a right person? Will you be able to treat her according to the truth principles?” Faced with the leader’s questions, I didn’t know how to answer. Later, the leader and I read a passage of God’s word together: **“By what principle do God’s words ask that people treat others? Love what God loves, and hate what God hates: This is the principle that should be adhered to. God loves those who pursue the truth and are able to follow His will; these are also the people that we should love. Those**

who are not able to follow God's will, who hate and rebel against God—these people are despised by God, and we should despise them, too. This is what God asks of man. ... During the Age of Grace, the Lord Jesus said, 'Who is My mother? And who are My brothers?' 'For whoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.' These words already existed back in the Age of Grace, and now God's words are even more clear: 'Love what God loves, and hate what God hates.' These words cut straight to the point, yet people are often unable to grasp their true meaning" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Recognizing One's Own Misguided Views Can One Truly Transform). After reading God's words, I understood God's will a little better. God requires us to treat people with principles, and we should **love what God loves, and hate what God hates**. In any matter of principle, and no matter who it is, we must treat them based on God's words, **"Love what God loves, and hate what God hates."** Emma had deliberately been spreading these rumors and fallacies, which had given people notions and misunderstandings about God, and confusion about God's work. This had disturbed the life of the church, which is doing evil in nature. God hates evildoers. People should stand on God's side, reject evildoers, and stop their wicked deeds to prevent their continued disturbance of others having normal gatherings and reading God's word. Once I understood this, I told the leader, "Although it's hard for me to accept the fact that Emma did evil, it is a fact. I won't be disturbed or constrained by her. I will treat her according to the principles given by God. If the church decides to isolate her, I will put aside my feelings for her, and I will not blame God." The leader told me, "In this kind of situation, to protect the brothers and sisters from continuing to be deceived by Emma, the church has decided to isolate Emma so that she could reflect on

herself.” Although I was worried about Emma’s predicament, I was also aware that Emma had acted as Satan’s servant, disrupting and disturbing the life of the church, and that the leader’s arrangement was to protect the brothers and sisters from being deceived or disturbed by rumors and fallacies, so I didn’t say anything more. Within a few days, Emma came to me, telling me that she was worried she would be removed from the gathering group. I said to her, “You’ve done wrong. If you really want to resolve these problems, you can bring them before the leader and the leader can help you resolve them, rather than spreading these rumors and fallacies among the brothers and sisters and causing disturbance to them.” I wanted to make Emma repent, but she didn’t respond to me. She just said she didn’t want to be removed from the group, and that if she was removed, she would just create a fake account with fake information and a fake address to re-enter the church as someone who investigates the true way, meaning that she would be arranged to go to a different church. Hearing Emma’s words, I was very surprised. Emma had absolutely no intention to repent. She even wanted to create a fake account to infiltrate the church to disrupt and sabotage. Wasn’t she just a servant of Satan? Emma’s actions also showed she wasn’t an honest person. She was planning to deceive the brothers, sisters, and the church. At this time, I thought of the watering deacon’s responsibility: “Upon discovering a problem, they should immediately address it by seeking the truth; major problems must be solved by fellowshiping with the church leaders. There must be no concealment of the true facts” (Work Arrangements). I felt that as a watering deacon, I had to adhere to the truth principles and protect my brothers and sisters from being disturbed and misled. So, I told the leader about this and sent her screenshots of our chat. But then I thought about how Emma was the one who first shared the gospel with me and about how we were friends, and so

I asked the leader whether it would be possible to let Emma stay on in her group. That way, she wouldn't apply with a fake account to disturb other churches. The leader said to me, "If she doesn't do evil or cause any disturbances, she can stay. But right now, she has no understanding of her evil deeds and the disturbance she has caused. She still wants to cheat, deceive, and sneak into another church. This shows she hasn't repented! If she really has an evildoer's essence, she won't repent or change, and she won't stop doing evil." The words of the leader were a warning to me, and only then did I realize that I was acting on emotion by wanting to keep Emma in the church. Emma had no knowledge of herself. There was no telling when she might do evil and disturb the church again. I had no principle in my pleading on behalf of Emma.

Later, the leader investigated and found that when Emma had notions, she didn't seek the truth to resolve them. Instead, she deliberately seized on things to attack God, misrepresented facts, spread rumors and fallacies, and misled the brothers and sisters to make them have notions about God's work. She also often said at gatherings that the leaders and group heads weren't up to their work to attack the positivity of the performance of their duties, causing them to be negative, which affected the results of their duties. Emma's actions seriously disrupted the church, and she didn't repent, so she was indeed an evildoer. In the end, the church expelled Emma according to the principles of removing people, and I no longer protected Emma. But what happened next left me mired in pain.

One morning, Emma suddenly sent me a message asking me why I was doing this to her, and she said that I had destroyed her trust in me, and that I had made the situation get so terrible. Later I realized that the reason she was angry was because of the matter of the fake account. The content of the screenshots I had sent to the leader had been written in our local

language which the leader didn't understand, so she asked another sister to translate what had been said. However, this sister just so happened to be one of Emma's friends and told her all about it. This was why Emma was sending me messages questioning me about it. I cried several times that morning. I felt that my friendship with Emma was about to end. I began to recall the moments I had spent with Emma. Emma helped me come up with ideas when I had difficulties, and we often shared our thoughts with one another.... But now, I didn't know how to face Emma. I couldn't calm my heart. I couldn't even concentrate long enough to host gatherings. I kept blaming myself, "Did I really make everything terrible? Maybe there's a better way to stop her from getting a fake account and disturbing the church." I began to doubt whether my decision was the right one. I was very perturbed. I even wanted to deactivate my account, avoid my brothers and sisters, and get away from it all, but I knew that I couldn't let go of my duties, that I shouldn't run from the problems and that I should proactively seek solutions. So, I told the leader about my state. The leader sent a passage of God's word to me: **"You must enter from the side of positivity; be active and not passive. You must be unshaken by anyone or anything, in all situations, and you must not be influenced by anyone's words. You must have a stable disposition; no matter what people say, you must immediately put into practice what you know to be the truth. You must always have My words at work inside of you, regardless of whom you might be facing; you must be able to stand firm in your testimony to Me and show consideration for My burdens. You must not blindly agree with others without having your own ideas; rather, you must have the courage to stand up and object to those things that do not conform with the truth. If you know clearly that something is wrong, yet lack the courage to expose it, then you are not a**

person who practices the truth. You want to say something, but dare not come right out with it, so you beat around the bush and then change the topic; Satan is inside you holding you back, causing you to speak without any effect and to be unable to persevere until the end. You still carry fear in your heart, and is this not because your heart is still filled with Satan's ideas?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 12). After reading the word of God, the leader fellowshiped with me, "God's words are very clear. If you discover something that harms the work of the church and that hurts your brothers and sisters, or if there is a disturbance from Satan, you should stand up, have the courage to expose it, stop it, and defend the work of the church. Only this is someone who practices the truth. If we know something is wrong, yet are still constrained by our emotions, fear breaking up relationships with others, and can't adhere to the truth principles, then we are on the side of Satan, and this goes against God's will! You discovered your friend spreading fallacies, and you exposed and stopped her, protecting your brothers and sisters from harm. You made the right choice, and there is no need to blame yourself or be sad." After reading the word of God and listening to the sister's fellowship, I saw that my stature was still too small, and that I lacked discernment. I had clearly acted in line with principle, but when Emma complained and accused me, it shook me, and I doubted whether I had been wrong. Now I know that my choice and practice had been right. In matters involving the work of the church and the lives of my brothers and sisters, I must have principles and take a firm stance. I had to learn to discern right from wrong and not be constrained by emotions.

After understanding God's will, I calmed myself and focused on my duty. But things didn't end there. Emma suddenly sent another message to me, saying, "I've been removed from the group. Are you happy now? This

is all thanks to you. Thanks a lot!” There was mockery and sarcasm in those words. I didn’t know how to reply to Emma for a while. I knew that at that moment our friendship was over, and I was very sad. Our relationship was so good, and it was she who preached the gospel to me. But now, I’ve reported her problem to the leader. Haven’t I betrayed her? What will she think of me? What should I do now? Should I say sorry to her? Did I break her trust in me? Did I fail to cherish our friendship? Did I really do the right thing? In my confusion and pain, I read a passage of God’s words: **“Behavior that cannot obey Me absolutely is betrayal. Behavior that cannot be loyal to Me is betrayal. Cheating Me and using lies to deceive Me is betrayal. Harboring many notions and spreading them everywhere is betrayal. Being unable to uphold My testimonies and interests is betrayal. Offering false smiles when far from Me in heart is betrayal. These are all acts of betrayal of which you have always been capable, and they are commonplace among you. None of you may think of this as a problem, but that is not what I think. I cannot treat a person’s betrayal of Me as a trifling matter, and I certainly cannot ignore it”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Very Serious Problem: Betrayal (1)). After reading God’s word, I was enlightened. I had always been thinking that it was me who had betrayed my friend. Why didn’t I think about whether my opinions and behavior are in line with the truth or whether I betray God? I shouldn’t just worry about my friend’s feelings and ignore God’s attitude. God’s words are very clear: **“Being unable to uphold My testimonies and interests is betrayal.”** Emma had spread notions about God’s work, deceived the brothers and sisters, and disturbed church life. She also wanted to create a fake account to deceive others. These are all actions of Satan, and they tear down the work of the church. If I had chosen to stand on Emma’s side and not practice the truth, that would

be standing on the side of Satan and betraying God! I also thought of God's words: **"Be loyal to Me no matter what, and bravely advance; I am your rock of strength, so rely on Me!"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 10). I should sincerely pray to God and trust God, and believe that God would guide me to know right from wrong, learn to discern people, and keep me from losing my principles and position in this matter.

Later, I wondered, "When I found out that Emma was doing something wrong, I reported it to the leader. This was clearly to safeguard the work of the church. Why am I always feeling sorry for Emma?" Later, it was God's word that provided an answer to my question. God's words say: **"If you do not have a normal relationship with God, then no matter what you do to maintain your relationships with other people, no matter how hard you work or how much energy you put in, it will all belong to a human philosophy for living. You will be protecting your position among people and attaining their praise through human perspectives and human philosophies, rather than establishing normal interpersonal relationships according to the word of God. If you do not focus on your relationships with people, and maintain a normal relationship with God instead, if you are willing to give your heart to God and learn to obey Him, then your interpersonal relationships will naturally become normal. ... Normal interpersonal relationships are established upon the foundation of turning one's heart toward God, not through human effort. If God is absent from a person's heart, then their relationships with other people are merely relationships of the flesh. They are not normal, they are lustful indulgences, and they are hated and loathed by God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. It Is Very Important to Establish a Normal Relationship With God). **"In all you do and all you say, be able to set**

your heart right and be righteous in your actions, and do not be led by your emotions, nor act according to your own will. These are principles by which believers in God must conduct themselves” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How Is Your Relationship With God?). I understood from God’s word that I cared too much about protecting my relationships with others and that I had neglected my normal relationship with God and lived in fleshly emotions. The fact is, maintaining relationships with others is purely for the sake of one’s own interests, image, and status. All these things come from the flesh. It is also tainted with emotions and personal intentions, and does not conform to the truth principles. I realized that I was swayed on this matter of Emma and had no position, because I was constrained by emotions, which prevented me from doing the right thing. I only thought of maintaining my friendship, my image, and my place in people’s hearts, and as a result, I was trapped in emotion. So I couldn’t treat people by the truth principles, much less consider the interests of the church. I had even wanted to give up my duty, distance myself from the brothers and sisters, and betray God. Only then did I see that emotions are selfish. Satan uses emotions to control people, causing them to betray the truth and God. I also realized that, actually, when Emma preached the gospel to me and invited me to the gathering, these were the sovereign arrangements of God. I should have been grateful to God, not to Emma. Once I understood these things, I felt very relieved and much less tormented.

Later, at a gathering, I read a passage of God’s word, which let me see Emma’s nature essence more clearly. God’s words say: **“Those among brothers and sisters who are always giving vent to their negativity are lackeys of Satan, and they disturb the church. Such people must one day be expelled and cast out. In their belief in God, if people do not**

have a God-fearing heart, if they do not have a God-obeying heart, then not only will they be unable to do any work for Him, but on the contrary will become those who disturb His work and who defy Him. Believing in God but not obeying or fearing Him, and instead resisting Him, is the greatest disgrace for a believer. If believers are just as casual and unrestrained in their speech and conduct as unbelievers are, then they are even more evil than unbelievers; they are archetypal demons. Those who give vent to their poisonous, malicious talk within the church, who spread rumors, foment disharmony, and form cliques among the brothers and sisters—they should have been expelled from the church. Yet because now is a different era of God’s work, these people are restricted, for they are decidedly to be cast out. All who have been corrupted by Satan have corrupt dispositions. Some have nothing more than corrupt dispositions, while others are different: Not only do they have corrupt satanic dispositions, but their nature is also extremely malicious. Not only do their words and actions reveal their corrupt, satanic dispositions; these people are, moreover, the genuine devil Satan. Their behavior disrupts and disturbs God’s work, it disturbs the brothers’ and sisters’ life entry, and it damages the normal life of the church. Sooner or later, these wolves in sheep’s clothing must be cleared out; an unsparing attitude, an attitude of rejection, should be adopted toward these lackeys of Satan. Only this is standing on the side of God, and those who fail to do so are wallowing in the mire with Satan” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). This passage is God’s warning to people. I understand that those who do not practice the truth, who always spread rumors and sow discord are people who rebel against and resist God. Such people are not God’s chosen people, rather, they are Satan’s servants and evildoers.

Everything they do is hostile to God, and according to the rules of the church, such people are to be expelled. Thank God! Now, my heart is bright, and I have discernment. Based on Emma's behavior, I'm sure she is an evildoer. I also remembered that in "The Principles of Treating Others According to Their Essences" it says: "(4) So long as someone is confirmed essentially to be an evil person, an evil spirit, an antichrist, or a nonbeliever, that person must be cleared out or expelled, as enacted by the church; (5) Deceitful people who frequently reveal erroneous views, who frequently harbor notions of God and are defensive against Him, are counted among nonbelievers. They are to be cleared out or expelled" (170 Principles of Practicing the Truth, 132. The Principles of Treating Others According to Their Essences). According to principles, evildoers must be driven out of the church to prevent them from causing disruptions in the church, so that others will not be disturbed when they gather or perform their duties. I also understood that God allows evildoers to disturb the church so that God's chosen ones can understand the truth, learn to discern people, and treat people according to God's word. At the same time, it allows us to know our true stature, and learn to practice the truth and safeguard the interests of the church. Realizing these things, I was grateful to God. Without God's protection and the guidance of God's words, I would still be constrained by emotions, speaking for an evildoer, and being deceived by Emma. This is quite a dangerous thing! Once I recognized these things, I was no longer troubled by this matter, and I felt a great deal of release.

After that, Emma contacted me several times, but I was no longer influenced or disturbed by her. Having gone through this experience, I was full of gratitude to God. It was God who guided me to understand some truths, gain some discernment, and cast off the constraints of emotion. The truth is all too important for people. Only when we view people and matters

based on the truth can we have principles and not be misled and used by Satan. Thank God!

16. How I Resolved My Cunning and Deceit

By Frank, the Philippines

I always thought of myself as an honest person. I thought I was trustworthy in word and deed, and the people who knew me said that about me, too. I felt like I was an honest, dependable man. After gaining my faith, I hardly ever lied to brothers and sisters or willfully deceived others. So I always believed that even though I wasn't a perfectly honest person, at least I wasn't a cunning, deceitful person. Then through what the facts revealed, I gained some knowledge of my cunning nature and really saw my true face.

One day my partner, Sister Ashley, sent me a message asking whether I had followed up on a piece of work, and if there had been any progress. I suddenly realized I hadn't been keeping track of it at all these days, so I didn't know the details of any progress. I initially thought I'd just tell her that, but then hesitated, "I've always given the impression of being reliable, so if I state directly that I've forgotten to follow up on things recently, will she think I am irresponsible in my duty? I will leave her with a negative impression and will lose credibility in her eyes. No, I can't answer her directly. I will quickly seek out the sister managing that project so as to understand the situation, and then respond to Ashley. Then no matter how things are progressing, at least it will show that I am on top of things." So I acted like I hadn't seen the message and then responded after I'd followed up. Ashley didn't say anything to me at the time, but I kept feeling uneasy and anxious. Then I read this in God's words: **"Honesty means giving your heart to God, being genuine with God in all things, being open with Him in all things, never hiding the facts, not trying to deceive those above and below you, and not doing things only to curry favor with God. In short, to be honest is to be pure in your actions and words, and**

to deceive neither God nor man” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). God’s words put me to shame. It didn’t seem like I’d lied, but what I’d revealed through my thinking, and my objectives in my actions, were to cover up and to hide my negligence in my duty, afraid that Ashley would see through me. When I acted like I hadn’t seen her message, then rushed to the sister in charge to understand the situation before responding, to give her the mistaken idea that I had followed up the work, wasn’t I creating a false impression and being deceptive? Wasn’t this cunning and deceptive behavior? On such a small issue, my thinking had been so complicated, and I had harbored intentions and employed tactics to hide the truth. How was that being honest? How was that being dependable? Realizing this, I saw I wasn’t as honest and sincere as I’d thought I was, and that sometimes I also played tricks and deceived others. Next time I had to speak the truth, and be an honest person, and no longer hide things to deceive others.

Just a few days later, Ashley let me know that our leader was going to check in on our work in two days’ time. Hearing this set my heart pounding, “The leader doesn’t usually suddenly seek us out, so why is she seeking us this time? Has she discovered a problem in our work? Recently I’ve been busy with watering work and haven’t been following up or achieving much in the video production that I’m managing. What should I say if the leader asks me about that?” So I guessed what questions she might ask, and what I wasn’t aware of, so I could quickly figure it out. Otherwise, if she had a question I couldn’t answer, wouldn’t it look like I wasn’t doing practical work? I was kind of worried and anxious. After some thought I realized it was normal for a leader to check up on work—why was I overthinking things? I was not only speculating on what the leader wanted, but I was racking my brains on how to cover up my issues, afraid

she would see my problems and deal with me for not doing practical work and say I was a false leader. Wasn't I trying to disguise myself? It was very normal for a leader to ask about work. I should confront it calmly and make changes if problems or deviations are found. Why was I overthinking things so much? Wasn't I being cunning? I remembered the words of God: **"I take pleasure in those who are not suspicious of others, and I like those who readily accept the truth; toward these two kinds of people I show great care, for in My eyes they are honest people"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How to Know the God on Earth). **"Let your communication be, Yes, yes; No, no: for whatever is more than these comes of evil"** (Matthew 5:37). God's words are clear. Honest people should call a spade a spade, they should speak frankly, but my thinking was so convoluted. I wanted to cover up the truth, so I was coming up with devious thoughts. So, I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to practice the truth and be honest, and to be perfectly forthright no matter what the leader asked.

In our gathering, the leader asked first about video production work. I was directly responsible for this work, but I'd been spending most of my time and energy on watering work. I wasn't keeping up with the video work much. After I explained this, she dealt with me for not doing practical work, and then asked me how many new believers weren't regularly attending gatherings. I kind of panicked at that question. I hadn't been keeping up with the details of that, and I asked about it sometimes, but didn't take it seriously. I thought then, "I've just said most of my energy was devoted to watering work, so if I can't even tell the leader how many newcomers aren't regularly attending gatherings, what will she think of me? She might ask what I'm doing all day that I don't even know that, and whether I am actually doing any practical work at all. So many issues have already been exposed in the video work, if she finds problems in the watering work too,

will she just dismiss me right away?” So I just gave her an approximate figure, thinking it wasn’t a big deal if it was a little off. Anyway, it wasn’t an exact number, so it wasn’t really a lie. After our gathering, I looked into the details of it, and it turned out that my estimate was pretty far off. I was really concerned when I saw that. This time I had really told a bald-faced lie. I had been blatantly deceptive. Why couldn’t I keep myself from lying and deceiving? In prayer, I clearly had belief in being truthful. Why couldn’t I help myself when faced with this situation? I felt terrible about it. For two days, the word “deceit” kept popping up in my mind. I felt like I’d really done something disgraceful.

I prayed to God to seek on my problem. While self-reflecting, I read God’s words: **“Isn’t life exhausting for deceitful people? They spend all their time telling lies, then telling more lies to cover them up, and engaging in trickery. They bring this exhaustion upon themselves. They know that living like this is exhausting—so why would they still want to be deceitful, and not wish to be honest? Have you ever thought about this question? This is a consequence of people being fooled by their satanic natures; it stops them from ridding themselves of this kind of life, this kind of disposition. People are willing to accept being fooled like this and to live in this; they do not want to practice the truth and walk the path of light. You think that living like this is exhausting and that acting this way is unnecessary—but deceitful people think it absolutely necessary. They think that to not do so would cause them humiliation, that it would harm their image, their reputation, and their interests, too, and that they would lose too much. They treasure these things, they treasure their own image, their own reputation and status. This is the true face of people who do not love the truth. In short, when people are unwilling to be honest or practice the truth, it is because**

they do not love the truth. In their hearts, they treasure things like reputation and status, they like to follow worldly trends, and live under the power of Satan. This is a problem of their nature. There are people, now, who have believed in God for years, who have heard many sermons, and know what believing in God is all about. But they still do not practice the truth, and have not changed one bit—why is this? It’s because they do not love the truth. Even if they do understand a little of the truth, they are still not able to practice it. For such people, no matter how many years they believe in God, it will be for naught” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). **“Some people never tell anyone the truth. They deliberate on and polish everything in their minds before they speak to people. You can’t tell which of the things they say are true, and which are false. They say one thing today and another tomorrow, they say one thing to one person, and something else to another. Everything they say contradicts itself. How can such people be believed? It’s very difficult to get an accurate grasp of the facts, and you can’t get a straight word out of them. What disposition is this? It is deceitfulness. Is a deceitful disposition easy to change? It’s the most difficult to change. Anything that involves dispositions relates to a person’s nature, and nothing is harder to change than things to do with one’s nature. The saying, ‘A leopard can’t change its spots,’ is absolutely true! No matter what they’re talking about or doing, deceitful people always harbor their own aims and intents. If they do not have any, they will say nothing. If you try to understand what their aims and intents are, they will clam up. If they do accidentally let something true slip, they’ll go to any length to think of a way to twist it around, to confound you and stop you from knowing the truth. No matter what deceitful people are**

doing, they will not let anyone know the whole truth about it. No matter how much time people spend with them, no one knows what's really going on in their minds. Such is the nature of deceitful people. No matter how much a deceitful person speaks, other people will never know what their intents are, what they're really thinking, or exactly what they are trying to achieve. Even their parents have a hard time knowing this. Trying to understand deceitful people is extremely difficult, nobody can figure out what is on their minds. This is how deceitful people speak and act: They never speak their minds or convey what is really going on. This is a type of disposition, is it not? When you have a deceitful disposition, it does not matter what you say or do—this disposition is always within you, controlling you, making you play games and engage in trickery, toy with people, cover up the truth, and put up a front. This is deceitfulness” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Knowledge of the Six Kinds of Corrupt Dispositions Is True Self-Knowledge).

God's words showed me that I couldn't help but lie and deceive and cover up the truth because I was crafty and treasured my own face and status. In order to protect those things, I would think over and over what I wanted to say, going over it again and again in my head, and no matter how tiring that was, I didn't want to be direct. I thought of how I prayed to God for helping me be an honest person, but when the leader inquired about the very work I didn't have a grasp on, I thought that if I directly said I didn't know, she'd think I hadn't been doing practical work and wasn't reliable, and, at worst, might dismiss me. To protect my status, I didn't want the leader to see the problems or deviations in my duty, so I was thinking of ways to cover up the truth. I really didn't know how many newcomers weren't coming regularly to gatherings, but I cunningly made up an approximate figure so the leader would think I understood every aspect of my work well and could

do some practical work. I saw that I was willing to play tricks and be deceitful about something so simple just to protect my name and status. That was so cunning! In fact, it is not unusual for there to be problems or deviations while doing one's duty. As long as things are turned around promptly after they are discovered, it's fine. There's no need whatsoever to cover up or be deceitful. But in my effort to protect my reputation and status, I was dishonest and deceitful and covered up my problems, sacrificing my character and dignity. Wasn't this foolish? This made me realize that even though I outwardly seemed honest, I wasn't being honest in my words and deeds, nor was I simple in my thoughts. What I revealed was an entirely satanic disposition. I was cunning, deceitful and disgraceful. I was truly sly, filthy and corrupt. I even disgusted myself, so how could God not be disgusted by me and detest me? I'd always thought of myself as a truthful person who was hardly ever deceitful. Nor had I ever overtly done anything to deceive or to work against God, so I felt like He would see me as a good, honest man. I even thought I didn't need to work on practicing the truth of being honest, but I could keep doing my duty and following God that way, and ultimately I'd be saved. I truly had no knowledge of myself whatsoever. If it hadn't been for reality showing me the facts, and for the judgment and exposure of God's words, I wouldn't have understood myself at all. I finally saw that I was a far cry from an honest person. I wasn't even close.

After that, I read God's words: **“When antichrists are exposed, and dealt with and pruned, the first thing they do is to look for various reasons in their defense, to look for all kinds of excuses to try and get themselves off the hook, thus accomplishing their goal of shirking their responsibilities, and achieving their aim of being forgiven. What the antichrists fear most is that God's chosen ones will see through to their**

personality, to their weaknesses and flaws, to their Achilles' heel, to their true caliber and work ability—and so they try their utmost to put on an act and cover up their shortcomings, issues, and corrupt dispositions. When the game is up on their evildoing, the first thing they do is not admit or accept this fact, or do their utmost to make up for and compensate for their mistakes, but try to think of a way to cover them up, to confound and hoodwink those who are privy to their actions, to not let God's chosen ones see the true face of the matter, to not let them know how harmful their actions have been to God's house, how much they have disrupted and disturbed the work of the church. Of course, what they fear most is the Above finding out, because once the Above knows, they will be dealt with according to principle, and it will all be over for them, and they are bound to be dismissed and cast out. And so, when the antichrists commit evil and are exposed, the first thing they do is not to reflect on where they went wrong, where they violated principle, why they did what they did, what disposition they were governed by, what their motives were, what their state was at the time, whether it was because of waywardness or because of tainted motives. Instead of dissecting these things, much less reflecting on them, they rack their brains for any way to cover up the true facts. At the same time, they do their utmost to rationalize in front of God's chosen ones, in order to hoodwink them, trying to minimize the things they've done, to bluff their way out of it, so that they can remain in the house of God, acting with impunity, abusing their power, so that they are still able to deceive and control people, to make them look up to them and do as they say to satisfy their wild desires and ambitions” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eleven). God's words were really alarming for me. Especially reading the words “antichrists,” “try to think of a way to

cover them up,” “hoodwink,” and “confound,” I felt like God was judging and exposing me to my face. I thought about when Ashley asked if I’d followed up on that project, I didn’t immediately acknowledge I hadn’t, or even take the opportunity to reflect on myself and seek how to turn my deviations around. I pretended not to see her message, then rushed to find answers and respond. That way Ashley wouldn’t know I hadn’t been keeping up with the project or that I had taken no burden and no responsibility in my duty. She’d think I was reliable, someone to be trusted. Then when the leader came to check on my work, found some deviations and problems in my duty, and pruned and dealt with me, not only did I not accept it or self-reflect, acknowledging I wasn’t doing practical work and was being careless and irresponsible in my duty, but I had lied and been deceitful and covered up the truth. I even told myself, “I have to work harder in the future, to make sure I can quickly answer any of the leader’s questions, so she won’t find the errors or oversights in my work, but will think I am detail-oriented and responsible.” I was racking my brains to protect my name and status, dreading that people would see through me, and my good image as “conscientious, responsible, steadfast and reliable” would be lost. Wasn’t my goal to have others value me and think highly of me? I saw that my revealed disposition was truly that of an antichrist. When an antichrist is dealt with or exposed, they don’t submit and self-reflect, but they do their best to justify themselves, fob off responsibility and hide their own problems. They are totally shameless. Antichrists don’t show the slightest desire to accept the truth, but only their machinations to speak and act in a way that protects their status and name. Wasn’t I acting just like that? I wasn’t doing practical work or devoting myself to my duty, so I should have felt guilty and indebted. But not only did I have no perception, I continually tried my best to cover up and shield myself. I was truly

deceptive and cunning, despicable and evil. I felt like I'd been totally laid bare, exposed to the light of day, and that my actions were judged and condemned by God. I could also sense that God's disposition is righteous and tolerates no offense, and I felt fear and trembling. I knew I had to repent and make a change right away.

Then I read more of God's words: **"Only if people seek to be honest can they know how deeply corrupted they are, whether or not they really have any human likeness, and clearly take their own measure or see their deficiencies. Only when they are practicing honesty can they become aware of how many lies they tell and how deeply hidden their deceit and dishonesty are. Only while having the experience of practicing being honest can people gradually come to know the truth of their own corruption and know their own nature essence, and only then will their corrupt dispositions be constantly purified. Only in the course of their corrupt dispositions being constantly purified will people be able to gain the truth. Take your time experiencing these words. God does not perfect those who are deceitful. If your heart is not honest—if you are not an honest person—then you will not be gained by God. Likewise, you will not gain the truth, and will also be incapable of gaining God. What does it mean if you do not gain God? If you do not gain God and you have not understood the truth, then you will not know God, and so there will be no way you can be compatible with God, in which case you are the enemy of God. If you are incompatible with God, God is not your God; and if God is not your God, you cannot be saved. If you do not seek to attain salvation, why do you believe in God? If you cannot attain salvation, you will forever be a bitter enemy of God, and your outcome will be set. Thus, if people wish to be saved, then they must start by being honest. In the end, those who are gained**

by God are marked with a sign. Do you know what it is? It is written in Revelation, in the Bible: ‘And in their mouth was found no lie; they are without blemish’ (Revelation 14:5). Who are ‘they’? They are those who are saved, perfected and gained by God. How does God describe these people? What are the characteristics and expressions of their conduct? They are without blemish. They speak no lies. You can probably all understand and grasp what speaking no lies means: It means being honest. What does ‘without blemish’ refer to? It means doing no evil. And what foundation is doing no evil built on? Without any doubt, it is built upon the foundation of fearing God. To be unblemished, therefore, means to fear God and shun evil. How does God define someone without blemish? In God’s eyes, only those who fear God and shun evil are perfect; thus, people who are unblemished are those who fear God and shun evil, and only those who are perfect are unblemished. This is totally correct” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). From God’s words I saw that cunning people are full of lies. They live out an entirely satanic disposition and are enemies of God. They belong to Satan and can’t be saved by God. I saw how my lies and deceit had put me in grave danger, and that I was so shameless! If it were not for these instances of exposure, I would never have realized the extent of my lies and deceit, nor the severity of my crafty and cunning satanic disposition. I couldn’t carry on that way. I had to admit my mistakes, practice the truth, and be an honest person.

I got ready to send a message to the leader to tell her what really happened, but I felt kind of hesitant. “If I tell her I lied, what will the leader think of me? Won’t she think I’m such a cunning person, overthinking such a simple matter, even lying about it, and that I’m not trustworthy? Maybe this time I won’t say anything, but next time I’ll be straightforward, honest,

and that will count as being repentant.” I kept comforting myself that I wouldn’t ever lie again, but my conscience was accused, and I felt guilty. I read a passage of God’s words: **“Many practical problems arise as people experience being honest. Sometimes they speak without thinking, they slip up momentarily and tell a lie because they are governed by a wrong motive or aim, or vanity and pride, and as a result, they have to keep telling more and more lies to cover it up. In the end, they do not feel at ease in their hearts, but they can’t take those lies back, they lack the courage to correct their mistakes, to admit that they told lies, and in this way, their mistakes go on and on. After this, it is always like there is a rock pressing on their hearts; they always want to find an opportunity to come clean, to admit their mistake and repent, but they never put this into practice. Ultimately, they think it over and say to themselves, ‘I’ll make up for it when I perform my duty in the future.’ They always say they’ll make up for it, but they never do. It is not as simple as just apologizing after telling a lie—can you make up for the harm and consequences of telling lies and engaging in deception? If, amidst great self-hatred, you are able to practice repentance, and never do that kind of thing again, then you might receive God’s tolerance and mercy. If you speak honeyed words and say that you’ll make up for your lies in the future, but do not truly repent, and later continue to lie and deceive, then you are extremely stubborn in your refusal to repent, and you are sure to be cast out. This should be recognized by people who are possessed of conscience and sense. After telling lies and engaging in deception, it is not enough to only think about making amends; what matters most is that you must truly repent. If you wish to be honest, then you must resolve the problem of lying and deception. You must tell the truth and do practical things. Sometimes telling the**

truth will result in you losing face and being dealt with, but you will have practiced the truth, and obeying and satisfying God in that one instance will be worth it, and it will be something that brings you comfort. In any case, you will have finally been able to practice being honest, you will have finally been able to say what's in your heart, without trying to defend or vindicate yourself, and this is true growth. Regardless of whether you are dealt with or replaced, you will feel steadfast in your heart, for you did not lie; you will feel that since you didn't do your duty properly, it was right for you to be dealt with, and for you to take responsibility for it. This is a positive mental state. And yet, what will the consequences be if you engage in deception? After you engage in deception, how will you feel in your heart? Uneasy; you will always feel that there is guilt and corruption in your heart, you will always feel accused: 'How could I tell lies? How could I have engaged in deception yet again? Why am I like this?' You will feel like you cannot lift your head high, like you are too ashamed to face God. In particular, when people are blessed by God, when they receive God's grace, compassion, and tolerance, they feel even more that it is shameful to deceive God, and in their hearts, they have a stronger sense of reproach, and less peace and joy. What problem does this demonstrate? That deceiving people is a revelation of a corrupt disposition, it is to rebel against and resist God, and so it will bring you pain" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). It was my own state that God's words revealed. I felt like God was saying all that directly to me, and I saw that being deceitful and being an honest person are diametrically opposed paths. Being deceitful isn't the right path, and it's not within normal humanity. People might sometimes achieve their goals with lies and tricks, but what they lose

is their integrity and dignity. It will bring nothing but guilt and uneasiness, and they'll live in darkness, being duped and ridiculed by Satan. I saw that with all my lies and deceit, I was harboring shameful secrets that couldn't bear the light of day, and I was being painfully toyed with by Satan! My lies and deceit satisfied my vainglory for the moment, but were detested and condemned by God and did not have His approval. Wasn't this idiotic? At every crucial point when I needed to tell the truth, I was going easy on myself, saying, "Next time I will practice the truth, next time." I was always forgiving of myself, not practicing the truth that I understood, so I never lived out the reality of being an honest person, and never put aside my deceitful disposition. How could God save someone like this? Thinking on this, I told myself I couldn't keep doing that, that it didn't matter how people saw me, and that I needed more than anything to live before God, accept His scrutiny, and be someone He can approve of. That's what's key. I should be simple and open and speak the truth. Even if someone saw me clearly and I lost my face and status, practicing the truth and being honest would mean gaining God's approval, and that's what matters most and is so valuable and meaningful! Also, I was always covering up my own problems, and though others might not find out about them and I might not be dealt with or blamed, I had no true knowledge of my own corruption and faults, so I couldn't change my corrupt disposition or do better in my duty. Those things stayed buried deep in my heart like a tumor that just wouldn't stop growing, and would ultimately be the end of me. But the brothers and sisters who were open and simple would just put all of their mistakes or problems in their duty on the table openly, and sometimes they were dealt with, blamed, or even dismissed, but that really touched them in their hearts. They were able to see their problems sooner and seek the truth to resolve them, and that brought them great progress in life. Although being

open and simple might have been embarrassing, they gained God's approval from practicing the truth. That's being intelligent. I used to think I was full of ideas, that I was clever, and it was smart to pull the wool over others' eyes, but I was a complete and utter fool, a total idiot! I was being too smart for my own good. I was totally ridiculous! Realizing this, I stopped caring what people might think of me and just wanted to practice the truth and shame Satan, instead of disappointing God again. So I mustered up my courage to tell the leader the truth, including the reason I'd lied and what my intentions were. After I sent the message, I felt peace and a sense of release. The leader replied shortly after that, saying, "Working to be honest this way is great. I also have a cunning corrupt disposition...." I was so moved to see that, and also really ashamed. This one attempt at being an honest person really showed me that it's the only proper way to be a human being.

After that, I started intentionally trying to practice honesty in daily life in my words and actions, and I found that I wasn't accurate or objective in many of the things I said. Sometimes I spoke based on my notions and imagination, and sometimes I'd exaggerate or speak incorrectly. Sometimes I'd intentionally misrepresent myself and be deceitful. It became more and more obvious that I really was a compulsive liar. I remember once a leader sent a message asking me how a project was coming along, and I unconsciously thought, "I haven't found out the situation in time, but if I say 'I don't know, I need to go and ask,' would the leader think I wasn't pragmatic, and could only shout slogans? Maybe I shouldn't say anything, but quickly check the situation and reply. At least then even if it isn't done, the leader won't have anything bad to say about me, and it will show I am at least following up on things." When I was just about to do that, I realized that I was being deceptive for the sake of my own reputation and status

again. So I prayed silently to God, “Oh God, I want to forsake my cunning intentions and practice the truth as an honest person. Please guide and help me.” After I prayed, these words of God came to mind: **“Telling lies means selling out one’s character and dignity. It strips away one’s dignity and one’s character, and it displeases and disgusts God. Is this worthwhile? It is not”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). The words “character” and “dignity” really spurred me to speak the truth, to stop living like a demon. So I just sent a straight answer back, saying, “I’m not sure of the details, I need to look into it first.” I felt such a sense of peace in my heart after sending that. I felt more and more that being honest is the most fundamental aspect of humanity, it is humanity’s bottom line. Only honesty is the likeness of a normal person. Thanks to God for saving me!

17. A Special Experience in Youth

By Zhengxin, China

In 2002, when I was 18 years old, I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. In July of 2004, Brother Wang Cheng and I were arrested by the police while preaching the gospel in another province. At that time, I thought, "We're just preaching the gospel, and haven't broken any laws. Besides, I'm young, so the police probably won't do anything to me. Maybe they'll just question me, then let me go." Little did I expect, after they brought us to the police station, an officer pounded on the table and interrogated me viciously: "What's your name? Where do you live? Who asked you to come? Who did you preach the gospel to?" When I didn't respond, he slapped me hard across the face twice, so hard that it made my ears ring, and said that by preaching the gospel we were disrupting social order and breaking the law. This made me furious, and I thought, "That's ridiculous! We preach the gospel because we want others to be good people and follow the right path. How can you call that disrupting social order?" But seeing how vicious the police were, I knew it was useless to reason with them, so I said nothing at all. Later, they handcuffed Wang Cheng and me and put us in a police car. As they drove, I was really anxious. I was very afraid that they would beat and torture me when we arrived at our destination. If I couldn't bear the hardship and ended up becoming a Judas, I would not only offend God's disposition, I would also cause more brothers and sisters to be arrested and suffer the same torment as me. Silently, I prayed to God over and over: "God, I'm so scared. Please protect me, and give me confidence and strength." After I prayed, I felt a little calmer.

They took us to the Municipal Criminal Investigation Office. When they searched us, one of the officers saw I had a pager on me and said I

must be a leader. When I heard this, I thought, “If they think I’m a leader, I doubt they’ll let me go so easily.” Seeing that I didn’t say anything, a police officer surnamed Zhao said with an expressionless smile, “If you won’t tell us what you know, we’ll see how long you can hold out!” He kicked me a bunch of times, calling me names as he did so, and then punched me in the chest, hurting me really badly and knocking the wind out of me. He punched and kicked me some more, knocking me back more than 2 meters and nearly sending me tumbling over. I endured the pain in silence and didn’t say a word. He finally stopped when he was tired, then said fiercely, “If you don’t start talking, we’ll put you in the tiger chair and give you a taste of our electric baton!” I was really scared. I was already in pain from being kicked and punched. I didn’t know if I could handle being strapped to the tiger chair and electrocuted, so I silently prayed to God over and over, “Oh God, please protect my heart and give me confidence and courage. I want to rely on You to stand firm and I will never be a Judas.” Then, I remembered some of Almighty God’s words: **“You should not be afraid of this and that; no matter how many difficulties and dangers you might face, you are capable of remaining steady before Me, unobstructed by any hindrance, so that My will may be carried out unimpeded. This is your duty.... Now is the time that I shall test you: Will you offer your loyalty to Me? Can you loyally follow Me to the end of the road? Be not afraid; with My support, who could ever block this road?”** (The Word, Vol.

1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 10). Indeed, God is my staunch backup, and my life is in His hands. It had been with God’s permission that I was arrested. This was God’s test for me. No matter how much the police tortured me, I would absolutely stand firm in my testimony to God. One of the police officers asked me my name and address. I thought, “My family is currently hosting church leaders at home.

If I say where I live, and the police go to search our house, then my family members and the leaders will be arrested, so I can't tell them." When he saw I wasn't saying anything, he got really mad, and without a word, picked up the book of God's word and struck me hard across the face with it, making my face hurt really bad, and then he kicked me viciously. Meanwhile, another police officer punched me hard in the chest. They didn't stop until they were out of breath. Seeing I still wasn't talking, one of them said, "He's a real zealot. Lock him up in prison and make him suffer!" When I heard that I was going to be imprisoned, I felt a little scared. I'd heard that in prisons, it's all prisoners beating prisoners. If I really were to be locked up, what kind of torture would I have to endure? Would they maim me? What if I couldn't handle it? I thought at great length about this, but I knew, at the very least, I couldn't become a Judas and betray God, no matter what. I swore an oath to God, "God! My stature is too small and I can't stand strong on my own, but I'm ready to lean on You. Please be with me, and give me the will to endure suffering. I will never be a Judas, and I will not betray my brothers and sisters!" After I prayed, I felt a sense of strength and confidence.

Later, a middle-aged police officer pretended to be friendly with me, saying, "Look at you. You're young, tall, and handsome. Why don't you find a good girlfriend or a good job? Why bother believing in God?" Then he took out a letter of repentance for me to sign. I read it and realized signing it would mean I was betraying God. I couldn't sign that letter! When I refused to sign it, the officer bashed the hard-cover book of God's word across my temple, making my ears ring again, and a big welt suddenly appeared on my head. After being hit like that, my head was all numb and my face swollen, and my legs were sore and swollen after being kicked so hard. I felt as if I was paralyzed all over, and my body hurt so much that I

could barely hold back my tears. I thought, “If I keep refusing to sign the letter of repentance, will they beat me even harder? Will they kill me? But I can’t sign it. To sign this is to betray God.” At that moment, I thought of a passage of Almighty God’s words: **“When you face suffering, you must be able to lay aside concern for the flesh and to not make complaints against God. When God hides Himself from you, you must be able to have the faith to follow Him, to maintain your previous love without allowing it to falter or dissipate. No matter what God does, you must submit to His design and be prepared to curse your own flesh rather than make complaints against Him. When you are faced with trials, you must satisfy God, though you may weep bitterly or feel reluctant to part with some beloved object. Only this is true love and faith”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). I understood that hardship and tribulation was a test for me, to see whether I had genuine faith, and whether I could stand firm in my witness to God. God said that genuine faith means submitting to His arrangements in every environment and satisfying Him even if it means enduring torment and pain. I had to completely entrust myself to God, and no matter how much suffering I endured, I could not submit to Satan. I needed to lean on God and bear witness. With this in mind, I prayed, “God, no matter how they beat me, even if they beat me to death, I’ll never sign that letter of repentance.” That night, the police officers sent me and Wang Cheng to the detention house, where we were detained separately.

The officer on duty took me to a cell. There were over a dozen people inside, who all had fierce faces and expressions. The cell looked so eerie and terrifying that I was really scared. The officer said to the prisoners, “This is a believer in God. Take ‘good care’ of him.” The instant he finished talking, a couple prisoners came over to beat and kick me, then told me to

strip naked. They brought over a hose and doused my body with cold water for over half an hour, at which point I was shivering from the cold. They kept asking me what my name was and who I preached the gospel to. I kept praying to God silently, asking Him to protect my heart. I didn't say a word. The next day, they beat me again. An inmate grabbed my hair and slammed the back of my head against the wall so hard that my ears rang and my nose bled. Later, they "airplaned" me, meaning they made me bend over while two prisoners grabbed my arms and rammed me hard against the wall, causing my head to welt and making me dizzy and faint. Before I could recover my senses, they gave me a "pai gow," meaning they held me on the ground with my arms behind me, while one person in front grabbed my hands and yanked me forward, while another sat on my back grabbing my arms and shoving me forward. My arms felt like they were being ripped out of their sockets. I screamed in pain. They tortured me for more than ten minutes before calling it quits, and when they finally let me go, I had no feeling in my arms. I thought, "Are my arms crippled now? If they are, I'm still young, so how will I survive in the future? I don't know what they'll do to torture me next. Will they beat me to death?" The more I thought about it, the more scared I felt. But then I thought of Almighty God's words: **"When people are ready to sacrifice their lives, everything becomes trifling, and no one can get the better of them. What could be more important than life? Thus, Satan becomes incapable of doing any more in people, there is nothing it can do with man"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of "God's Words to the Entire Universe", Chapter 36). I realized that Satan knows people love life and fear death, so it uses our weakness to attack us and force us to betray God. I couldn't fall for Satan's trick and live in disgrace for the sake of preserving my life. I thought of the saints of past eras, who suffered so much to preach

the gospel. Some were arrested and imprisoned, and some even gave up their lives. It was an honor that I could hear the voice of God in the last days, preach the gospel, and testify for God's appearance and work. Even if these people tortured me to death, I was being persecuted for the sake of righteousness. This was a glorious thing, and it would mean I hadn't lived my life in vain. Upon realizing this, I found strength in my heart. No matter how they persecuted me, I would stand firm and not betray God.

Later, when the police brought me for interrogation, they threatened me, saying, "You still have a chance to confess. You're a political prisoner, and if you don't confess, you'll be sentenced. The people you'll meet in prison are vicious. You'll be sorry! It's hard to say if you'll come out alive." As soon as I heard I was going to be sentenced, and had been designated as a political prisoner, I realized this was a serious crime. How many years would I have to serve? Would I have to spend my entire youth in prison? I heard from the other prisoners that many people in prison were beaten to death. I was feeling even more worried. I didn't know what methods the prisoners might use to torture me, or if I would survive. The more I thought about it, the more miserable I felt. I really didn't want to be sentenced, and I was dying to get out of that place. I prayed over and over to God, saying, "God! I am very weak right now, and I don't understand Your will, but I know this environment has come to me with Your permission. Please enlighten and guide me so that I can stand firm." After praying, I recalled Almighty God's words: **"Perhaps you all remember these words: 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' You have all heard these words before, yet none of you understood their true meaning. Today, you are profoundly aware of their true significance. These words shall be fulfilled by God during the last days, and they shall be fulfilled in those**

who have been brutally persecuted by the great red dragon in the land where it lies coiled. The great red dragon persecutes God and is the enemy of God, and so, in this land, those who believe in God are thus subjected to humiliation and oppression, and these words are fulfilled in you, this group of people, as a result. Because it is embarked upon in a land that opposes God, all of God's work faces tremendous obstacles, and accomplishing many of His words takes time; thus, people are refined as a result of God's words, which is also part of suffering. It is tremendously difficult for God to carry out His work in the land of the great red dragon—but it is through this difficulty that God does one stage of His work, making manifest His wisdom and His wondrous deeds, and using this opportunity to make this group of people complete” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). After contemplating God's words, I understood that my persecution and tribulation today was something I had been meant to suffer. This was persecution for righteousness' sake and suffering alongside Christ. It was meaningful. Being arrested and persecuted this way allowed me to clearly see the evil essence of the great red dragon. The great red dragon is an enemy of God and a devil that resists Him. This situation also showed me how the incarnate God works and saves people in the country of the great red dragon. Indeed, it is very difficult work. With this in mind, I felt greatly inspired. I felt like I couldn't let God down. Even if they beat me to death, I was ready to stand firm and satisfy God.

Fourteen days later, the police escorted me and a few other brothers and sisters into a police car, saying our sentence to reeducation through labor had been issued, and that they were taking us to the labor center. On the way there, I thought, “I don't know how many years I will be at the labor center. I hope it's not too long, so I can leave, have gatherings with

my brothers and sisters soon, and continue fulfilling my duty. In the past, I was too frivolous, and didn't perform my duty properly. When I get out, I promise to pursue the truth and perform my duty well." When we arrived at the Municipal Public Security Bureau, the police went in and got the sentences of reeducation through labor, and read them to us in the car. Several brothers and sisters were sentenced to a year or a year and a half, but my sentence was three years. Upon hearing this, I felt paralyzed. I thought, "Three years? Why is my sentence longer than others'? How can I survive that long?" I was agonized beyond words, and couldn't accept it. I was full of despair. But then, I remembered Almighty God's words: **"While undergoing trials, it is normal for people to be weak, or to have negativity within them, or to lack clarity on God's will or their path for practice. But in any case, you must have faith in God's work.... God does the work of perfection on people, and they cannot see it, cannot feel it; under such circumstances, your faith is required. People's faith is required when something cannot be seen by the naked eye, and your faith is required when you cannot let go of your own notions. When you do not have clarity about God's work, what is required of you is to have faith and to take a firm stance and stand witness. When Job reached this point, God appeared to him and spoke to him. That is, it is only from within your faith that you will be able to see God, and when you have faith God will perfect you. Without faith, He cannot do this"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). After I contemplated God's words, I understood that no matter what kind of miserable circumstances I encountered, or how abhorrent they were, I could only stand if I had faith in God. But I lacked faith in God. As soon as I heard I was to be sent to reeducation through labor for three years, I couldn't accept it, so I tried to reason with God, and complained to Him. I

wished that the sentence would be lighter, and I could suffer less. In the past, I had sworn before God that I would follow Him no matter how difficult things became, but now, faced with this environment that was not in line with my notions, I became negative and complained. I was so rebellious. I couldn't carry on this way. I had to rely on God to experience the next environment.

At the labor center, I didn't get enough to eat every day, and I was overworked on an empty stomach. Sometimes I'd even have to work until two or three in the morning, and if I said the wrong thing while working or made a mistake, then they'd beat me. Every time I got back from work, I was tormented and locked in the water room for about an hour. This was the case all year round. The water room was very humid, and over time, many people got sick. Some got scabies, some got rheumatoid arthritis, and I had a rash all over my body. Every night I was so itchy that I couldn't fall asleep, and I scratched myself so much that I started bleeding, opening the recently formed scabs, and some of my skin came right off my body. I told the head guard that I needed a doctor, but he said nonchalantly, "It's just a rash. You're fine. It won't get in the way of your work." At this point, I felt especially miserable. I thought, "I got this condition at such a young age. What will I do if it doesn't go away? I'm overworked every day, and I have to endure beatings and humiliation from the prisoners. When will this pain end?" Dwelling on just made me more and more miserable. I felt particularly aggrieved when I saw other brothers were locked up together, and could fellowship and support each other, while I was alone with unbelievers, and there was no one around who I could talk to. I often curled up in my bed at night and shed tears in silence. I prayed to God, "God, I feel so weak here. Please enlighten me so that I can understand Your will."

Once, when we went out for exercise, a brother from another team secretly handed me a small packet. I took it to the workshop and opened it, and there was a note inside, with God's words copied onto it. I hadn't expected to see God's words in prison, and I was very moved and inspired. The passage read as follows: **"Man will be fully made complete in the Age of Kingdom. After the work of conquest, man will be subjected to refinement and tribulation. Those who can overcome and stand testimony during this tribulation are the ones who will ultimately be made complete; they are the overcomers. During this tribulation, man is required to accept this refinement, and this refinement is the last instance of God's work. It is the last time that man will be refined prior to the conclusion of all the work of God's management, and all those who follow God must accept this final test, and they must accept this last refinement. Those who are beset by tribulation are without the work of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of God, but those who have been truly conquered and who truly seek after God will ultimately stand fast; they are the ones who are possessed of humanity, and who truly love God. No matter what God does, these victorious ones will not be bereft of the visions and will still put the truth into practice without failing in their testimony. They are the ones who will finally emerge from the great tribulation"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Work and Man's Practice). Reading God's words made me feel touched. I saw that in the midst of adversity, I needed to have faith in God and rely on God to stand firm in my testimony to Him. I was in a team by myself, there were no brothers around me, and there were many struggles and hardships. This was a test for me. It allowed me to see my own shortcomings and my true stature. It also allowed me to be independent, experience this environment by relying on God, and overcome hardship and pain. When I was weak, my

brother helped me, passing on God's words to me, which really inspired me. I knew that this was God's love, and that God was always by my side watching over and protecting me. With this in mind, I found the strength to go on, and I had the confidence to endure this environment.

In 2006, I got severe athlete's foot. My toes were so raw that I couldn't walk. The police didn't let me have any medical treatment, and just gave me some ointment, but it not only didn't heal my feet, it actually made them worse. This greatly saddened me, and I felt like this place was too miserable and dark to bear. No one should have to endure this. But then, I remembered a hymn of God's words titled **"Song of the Overcomers"**: **"Have you ever accepted the blessings that you were given? Have you ever sought the promises that were made for you? You will surely, under the guidance of My light, break through the stranglehold of the forces of darkness. You will surely not, in the midst of darkness, lose the light guiding you. You will surely be the master of all creation. You will surely be an overcomer before Satan. You will surely, at the downfall of the kingdom of the great red dragon, stand up amid the myriad throngs to bear witness to My victory. You will surely stand firm and unwavering in the land of Sinim. Through the sufferings you endure, you will inherit My blessings, and will surely radiate My glory throughout the entire universe"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 19). After I contemplated this hymn of God's words, I understood God's good intentions. His intention is to perfect a group of people into overcomers in the country of the great red dragon who are able to escape Satan's dark dominion and be saved by God, and who are qualified to enter the kingdom of God and receive God's promises. As I thought about this carefully, I realized that if I hadn't experienced the cruel torture of the Communist Party and the inhuman treatment at the labor

center, I wouldn't have been able to clearly see the evil essence of the Communist Party's hatred of God and hostility toward God, much less completely reject it from the bottom of my heart. Without the torment of this miserable environment and being exposed by the facts, I wouldn't have realized that I was still making demands of God, or that when God's deeds weren't in line with my notions, I could still complain and reason with God, or that my stature was so small and that I had so little faith in God. Hadn't I received all of this knowledge and benefit from this miserable environment? This was God's grace to me! Thinking of God's love and salvation for me gave me confidence. I also thought of how Job had lost his children, grew sores all over his body, and endured so much fleshly suffering, yet still worshiped God without complaint. The minor sickness and little suffering I had endured wasn't worthy of mention compared to Job. I should obey and rely on God to stand firm in my testimony to Him. As I thought about this, I prayed to God, "God, no matter how bad this place is or how my body suffers, I am willing to submit. I don't want to be negative anymore, I have to grow up, so that You won't worry about me."

In the days that followed, the one thing I couldn't be without was praying. Whenever I was tired from work or the pain became unbearable and I felt negative and weak, I quickly prayed to God. Gradually I became stronger, I felt negative and weak less frequently, and I was able to properly face this environment that God had set up for me. Thank God! During those three years, by praying to God, relying on God, and relying on the guidance of God's words, I was able to make it through that difficult time.

After experiencing all this, I clearly saw that the great red dragon is Satan, the devil that hates God and harms and corrupts people. Only God is love, and only He can save people. When I was being tortured, it was God's word that guided me, gave me confidence and strength, and enabled me to

overcome the devil's cruelty. It was this miserable environment that made my young, ignorant and vulnerable self become strong, mature and stable, and I learned to rely on God and look up to Him when I was in trouble. It also allowed me to see God's omnipotence and sovereignty, and that God was always there for me, by my side to watch over and protect me, and ready to supply and help me at any time. No matter how great the persecution and tribulation I might face in the future, I am resolute to follow God!

18. The Consequences of Pursuing Comfort

By Chloe, Spain

I made videos in the church. During the work, I found that production on the more difficult projects required great expenditure, with the effects in every frame needing to be tried and modified repeatedly, and there were frequent failures. But on projects that were relatively simple, less effort was required, and the rate of success was greater. I thought, “Difficult projects have high technical requirements, I have to spend time thinking, finding materials to analyze and study, and the production cycle is long. Simpler projects aren’t so much trouble, I only need to master some simple methods and skills, and the production cycle is shorter, which means they can be completed more quickly. It seems like producing the simpler ones will save me a lot of trouble.” So, in my duties, I took stock of which projects were difficult and which were simple and then decided which to take. Once, I chose a simple project to do, and left the complicated ones to my brothers and sisters. When I saw how my brothers and sisters readily agreed, I felt a little guilty: Wasn’t I just shrinking back in the face of difficulties, and being unwilling to grasp the nettle? But then I thought, “Difficult projects take too much of my time and energy, and they consume too much mental effort, that is exhausting, so it is best for me to choose simple projects.” Once, after completing a project, I felt there was room for improvement, but I didn’t want to work too hard to change anything. I noticed my brothers and sisters didn’t see any problems when they checked it, so I didn’t make any changes and passed it off. Sometimes, when I had problems in producing videos, I only thought about them for a moment, and then I went to ask my brothers and sisters. I felt that this not only solved the problem quickly, it also didn’t tire me out, so it was an easy way to finish my tasks.

But when I did this, I felt a sense of self-blame, because these questions were actually very simple, and I could have solved them with a little effort. Asking my brothers and sisters delayed their duties, but I didn't reflect on myself. This kind of trickery therefore became the norm in how I performed my duties.

In addition to making videos, I had to lead my brothers and sisters in study, and raise everyone's professional skills, so I had to work more than usual. I not only had to learn professional skills, I had to find material and prepare lessons based on what my brothers and sisters needed and what their shortcomings were. It all felt like a difficult and tiring task. So I started thinking about how I could save time and not feel so tired, and I decided to send the tutorials to my brothers and sisters so they could watch them by themselves. That way, I wouldn't have to spend time and effort preparing class. I felt there couldn't be a better method. After a while, my brothers and sisters said the tutorials didn't solve their problems. At the time, I felt a bit sorry, so with no other choice, I found some materials to teach everyone in a simple manner, and I thought that it was sufficient to have organized everyone in study. Before long, our team leader said there were problems in a video we recently made, which delayed our work progress. When I heard that, I didn't reflect or try to understand myself, and I felt this duty not only required suffering and paying a price, it required responsibility if things went wrong, and there was a lot of work for little result, so I wanted this duty even less.

One day, my leader came to me and exposed me for muddling through and being cunning in my duties, and said if things didn't change, I would be dismissed. When I heard my leader say that, although I admitted I was muddling through my duties, I didn't feel any repentance. When I thought of the difficulties and problems I would have to face in future studies, I

didn't want to be responsible for organizing everyone's study anymore, which would make things easier for me. The next day, I went to my leader and said, "Could you get someone else to organize our team's study? I'm not good at it." She dealt with me after hearing that, saying, "You really can't do it well? Did you actually try? You always avoid hard work, you muddle through and try to be cunning, and you have bad humanity. Given those behaviors, you really aren't cut out for this. For now, do your devotionals and some self-reflection, and wait for further arrangements from the church." When I heard my leader say this, it felt like my heart had suddenly been hollowed out. I saw the brothers and sisters all busy with their duties, but I had been dismissed and lost my own. I can't put into words how sad I was. I had never considered I might really lose my duty. But then I thought, "God holds sovereignty over all things. My dismissal is the coming of God's righteous disposition. I need to obey and reflect on and know myself." In the days that followed, the scene of my leader dismissing me played over and over in my mind like a movie. When I thought of what the leader said, I felt miserable, especially my leader saying I had bad humanity. I didn't know how to reflect on or know myself, so in my pain, I prayed to God to ask Him to guide me in understanding myself.

Later, I saw some of God's words: **"It is something within a corrupt disposition to handle things so flippantly and irresponsibly: It is scumminess people often refer to. In all matters they do, they do it to the point of 'that's about right' and 'close enough'; it is an attitude of 'maybe,' 'possibly,' and 'four-out-of-five'; they do things perfunctorily, are satisfied to do the minimum, and are satisfied to muddle along as they can; they see no point in taking things seriously or striving for precision, and they see less point in seeking the truth principles. Is this not something within a corrupt disposition? Is it a manifestation of**

normal humanity? It is not. To call it arrogance is right, and to call it dissolute is also entirely apt—but to capture it perfectly, the only word that will do is ‘scummy.’ Most people have scumminess within them, just to different degrees. In all matters, they wish to do things in a perfunctory and slipshod manner, and there is a whiff of deceit in everything they do. They cheat others when they can, cut corners when they are able, save time when they can. They think to themselves, ‘So long as I avoid being revealed, and cause no problems, and am not called to account, then I can muddle through this. Doing a job well is more trouble than it is worth.’ Such people learn nothing to mastery, and they do not apply themselves or suffer and pay a price in their studies. They want only to get the patchwork sense of a subject and then call themselves proficient at it, believing they have learned all there is to know, and then rely on this to muddle their way through. Is this not an attitude people have toward other people, events, and things? Is it a good attitude? It is not. Simply put, it is to ‘muddle through.’ Such scumminess exists in all of corrupt mankind. People with scumminess in their humanity take the view and attitude of ‘muddling through’ on anything they do. Are such people able to perform their duty properly? No. Are they able to do things with principle? Even more unlikely” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part Two)). **“How can one tell the difference between noble and base people? Simply look at their attitude and actions toward duties, and look at how they treat things and behave when issues arise. People with integrity and dignity are meticulous, conscientious, and diligent in their actions, and they are willing to make sacrifices. People without integrity and dignity are desultory and slipshod in their actions, always up to some trick, always**

wanting to just muddle through. No matter what technique they study, they do not learn it diligently, they are unable to learn it, and no matter how much time they spend studying it, they remain utterly ignorant. **These are people of low character**” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part Two)). God’s words pierced my heart, especially His words, **“they cheat others when they can, cut corners when they are able,” “without character and dignity,”** and **“low character.”** Every word revealed my humanity and my attitude to my duties. I realized this was exactly how I performed my duties. I muddled through all I did, and only did things to a passable standard. I always sought ways to avoid suffering, to do things more easily, and never thought of how to perform my duties well. For fleshly comfort and to avoid suffering, I always chose to do the simpler, easier projects. After I’d finished, even when I saw problems and room for improvement, I was unwilling to make changes, just trying to muddle through. When our team needed to learn professional skills, I felt it was too tiring to organize my brothers and sisters in study. So for the sake of my fleshly comfort, I tried tricks and cunning to make my brothers and sisters watch the tutorials by themselves, which meant their skills never improved, made their duties less effective, and delayed the progress of work. Everywhere in my duties, I used tricks and deceit, I never gave thought to the work of the church. I had no humanity at all! I really was selfish, despicable, and had low character! As I reflected on these things, I felt a deep sense of regret and guilt. After that, I read in God’s word: **“On the surface, some people do not seem to have any serious problems throughout the time they perform their duties. They do nothing overtly evil; they do not cause disruptions or disturbances, or walk the path of the antichrists. In performing their duties, they do not have any major mistakes or problems of principle**

come up, yet, without realizing it, in a few short years they are exposed as not accepting the truth at all, as being one of the nonbelievers. Why is this so? Others cannot see an issue, but God scrutinizes these people's innermost hearts, and He sees the problem. They have always been perfunctory and unrepentant in the performance of their duties. As time goes on, they are naturally exposed. What does it mean to remain unrepentant? It means that though they have performed their duties throughout, they have always had the wrong attitude toward them, an attitude of carelessness and perfunctoriness, a casual attitude, and they are never conscientious, much less are they giving all their hearts to their duties. They may put in a little effort, but they are just going through the motions. They are not giving their all to their duties, and their transgressions are without end. In God's eyes, they have never repented; they have always been perfunctory and careless, and there has never been any change in them—that is, they do not relinquish the evil in their hands and repent to Him. God does not see in them an attitude of repentance, and He does not see a reversal in their attitude. They are persistent in regarding their duties and God's commissions with such an attitude and such a method. Throughout, there is no change in this stubborn, intransigent disposition, and, what is more, they have never felt indebted to God, have never felt that their carelessness and perfunctoriness is a transgression, an evildoing. In their hearts, there is no indebtedness, no guilt, no self-reproach, and much less is there self-accusation. And, as much time passes, God sees that this kind of person is beyond remedy. No matter what God says, and no matter how many sermons they hear or how much of the truth they understand, their heart is not moved and their attitude is not altered or turned around. God sees this and says: 'There is no hope for

this person. Nothing I say touches their heart, and nothing I say turns them around. There is no means of changing them. This person is unfit to perform their duty, and they are unfit to render service in My house.’ Why does God say this? It is because when they perform their duty and do work they are consistently careless and perfunctory. No matter how much they are pruned and dealt with, and no matter how much forbearance and patience are extended to them, it has no effect and cannot make them truly repent or change. It cannot make them do their duty well, it cannot allow them to embark on the path of pursuing the truth. So this person is beyond remedy. When God determines that a person is beyond remedy, will He still keep a tight hold on this person? He will not. God will let them go” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). **“How you regard God’s commissions is extremely important, and this is a very serious matter. If you cannot complete what God has entrusted to people, then you are not fit to live in His presence and you should be punished. It is perfectly natural and justified that humans should complete whatever commissions God entrusts to them. This is man’s supreme responsibility, and is just as important as their very lives. If you do not take God’s commissions seriously, then you are betraying Him in the most grievous way. In this, you are more lamentable than Judas, and should be cursed”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man’s Nature). I read God’s word over and over. I realized that in the past, despite outwardly appearing to perform my duties, in my heart, I was betraying God. I shirked heavy duties, considered only my fleshly interests, was unwilling to suffer and pay a price, and I always muddled through with tricks and cunning. Even when I could do my work better, I didn’t, because I felt although it wasn’t done very well, it was at least done, and that was enough. I never took the

problem of my own muddling through seriously, and I never reflected on myself. My leader exposed and warned me, but I didn't feel the slightest repentance and still considered my fleshly interests. When I thought of how my duty required hard work and paying a price, I didn't want the duty anymore. Why was I so numb and stubborn? God gave me chance after chance to repent and change, which was God's mercy for me, but I considered only my fleshly interests, didn't seek the truth or reflect on myself, and continued to stubbornly oppose God. I was so rebellious! One's duty is a commission and responsibility given by God, and they should do their utmost to fulfill it. But I had shirked heavy duties, muddled through to deceive God, and even had the cheek to ask for a lighter duty. Wasn't this resisting and betraying God? God's righteous disposition tolerates no offense, and God loathed all I had done. My dismissal showed God's righteousness. When I realized this, I felt a little frightened. I also felt contrition for doing things heartbreaking to God. I could no longer muddle through like this. I had to repent and change.

After that, I spread the gospel with my brothers and sisters. Because I hadn't mastered the principles and wasn't good at talking with people, the duty felt very difficult, and again I didn't want to work hard or pay the price. But I thought of my previous neglectful attitude toward my duty, and I realized being able to preach the gospel now was God's great mercy for me. I shouldn't run away when I faced trouble like before. Once I realized that, I felt much more active in making progress. I reflected on myself: Why did I want to shrink back and escape as soon as my duty felt troublesome? I read in God's words: **"Today, you do not believe the words I say, and you pay no attention to them; when the day comes for this work to spread and you see the entirety of it, you will regret, and at that time you will be dumbfounded. There are blessings, yet you do not know to enjoy**

them, and there is the truth, yet you do not pursue it. Do you not bring contempt upon yourself? Today, although the next step of God's work has yet to begin, there is nothing exceptional about the demands that are made of you and what you are asked to live out. There is so much work, and so many truths; are they not worthy of being known by you? Is God's chastisement and judgment incapable of awakening your spirit? Is God's chastisement and judgment incapable of making you hate yourself? Are you content to live under the influence of Satan, with peace and joy, and a little fleshly comfort? Are you not the lowliest of all people? None are more foolish than those who have beheld salvation but do not pursue to gain it; these are people who gorge themselves on the flesh and enjoy Satan. You hope that your faith in God will not entail any challenges or tribulations, or the slightest hardship. You always pursue those things that are worthless, and you attach no value to life, instead putting your own extravagant thoughts before the truth. You are so worthless! You live like a pig—what difference is there between you, and pigs and dogs? Are those who do not pursue the truth, and instead love the flesh, not all beasts? Are those dead ones without spirits not all walking corpses? ... I bestow real human life upon you, yet you do not pursue. Are you no different from a pig or a dog? Pigs do not pursue the life of man, they do not pursue being cleansed, and they do not understand what life is. Each day, after eating their fill, they simply sleep. I have given you the true way, yet you have not gained it: You are empty-handed. Are you willing to continue in this life, the life of a pig? What is the significance of such people being alive? Your life is contemptible and ignoble, you live amid filth and licentiousness, and you do not pursue any goals; is your life not the most ignoble of all? Do you have the gall to look upon God? If

you continue to experience in this way, will you not acquire nothing? The true way has been given to you, but whether or not you can ultimately gain it depends on your own personal pursuit” (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). Every one of God’s questions pierced my heart, as if God was calling me to account face to face, and I felt greatly in His debt. The incarnate God has expressed so much truth to water and supply us, so that we can gain the truth, cast off our corrupt dispositions, and have the chance to be saved. This is God’s greatest blessing for humankind. The truly wise will cherish the chance provided by God’s work, and seize their time to pursue the truth, fulfill the duties of a created being, pursue a change in their life disposition in the course of their duties, and finally they will understand the truth and be saved by God. But the blind and ignorant strive for fleshly enjoyment, they just get by, and they don’t work hard to pursue the truth. They go through the motions and make little effort in their duties, and no matter how long they believe, they never understand the truth, achieve no change in their life disposition, and are ultimately cast out by God. I thought about my behaviors. Wasn’t I precisely this kind of ignorant person? Satanic philosophies like “Live life on autopilot” and “Laziness has its blessings” were the principles I lived by. Each day I settled for the status quo, worked to get by, and sought fleshly comforts. I had believed in God for years without pursuing the truth, and without reflecting on whether I had achieved change in my disposition, nor whether my duty accorded with God’s will. My fleshly enjoyment was more important to me than gaining the truth, so I consistently shirked the heavy duties, muddled through and resorted to tricks and deceit, and refused to pay a price in anything that I did. This caused my duties not only to achieve no results, it also delayed and impacted the work of the church. And even like that, I felt no remorse

or guilt. I was truly numb. It was only then that I realized that, living by these false laws of Satan, only seeking fleshly comfort, making no effort to seek progress, becoming ever more corrupt, my conscience ever more numb, without any goals in my life—wasn't I just wasting my life? I only had myself to blame for losing my duty. I was too lazy, I was frivolous with my own character, and I wasn't worthy of anyone's trust, which disgusted my brothers and sisters and made God loathe me. In the past, I felt duties with high requirements and many tasks were equivalent to suffering. But in fact this wasn't suffering for my duties at all. Obviously, my nature was too lazy and selfish, and I was too concerned with the flesh. Although I had to make an effort and pay a price when I encountered difficulties in my duties, these were all things I could bear, because God never teaches pigs to sing. And God used these difficulties to show my corrupt disposition and deficiencies, so that I could know myself, seek the truth to resolve problems, and change my life disposition. At the same time, God hoped I could learn to look up to Him and rely on Him in the face of these difficulties, and have sincere faith. In the past, I was ignorant, blind, and didn't understand God's will. I lost many opportunities to gain the truth and be perfected by God, and I allowed this wonderful time to pass me by in vain. Although I had fleshly comfort, and didn't suffer or pay much of a price, I didn't possess any truth reality and my corrupt dispositions weren't resolved, I accrued no good deeds in my duties, I delayed the work of the church, and God loathed me. If I continued to live in such a muddle-headed manner, I would completely lose God's salvation in the end. Realizing all of this, I felt deep repentance, I loathed myself, and I didn't want to live that way anymore.

One day, during my devotional, I read two passages of God's word: **"Today's pursuit is entirely for the sake of laying the foundation for**

future work, so that you may be used by God and can bear witness to Him. If you make this the goal of your pursuit, you will be able to gain the presence of the Holy Spirit. The higher you set the goal of your pursuit, the more you can be perfected. The more you pursue the truth, the more the Holy Spirit works. The more energy you put into your pursuit, the more you will gain. The Holy Spirit perfects people according to their inner state. Some people say that they are not willing to be used by God or perfected by Him, that they just want their flesh to remain safe and not suffer any misfortune. Some people are unwilling to enter into the kingdom yet willing to descend into the bottomless pit. In that case, God will also grant your wish. Whatever you pursue, God will make it happen. So what are you pursuing at present? Is it being perfected? Are your present actions and behaviors for the sake of being perfected by God and being gained by Him? You must constantly measure yourself thus in your daily life. If you put all your heart into the pursuit of a single goal, God will assuredly perfect you. Such is the path of the Holy Spirit. The path on which the Holy Spirit guides people is attained by means of their pursuit. The more you thirst to be perfected and gained by God, the more the Holy Spirit will work within you. The more you fail to seek, and the more negative and retrogressive you are, the more you deprive the Holy Spirit of opportunities to work; as time goes on, the Holy Spirit will abandon you. Do you wish to be perfected by God? Do you wish to be gained by God? Do you wish to be used by God? You should pursue doing everything for the sake of being perfected, gained, and used by God, so that the universe and all things can see God's actions manifested in you. You are the master among all things, and in the midst of all that there is, you will let God enjoy testimony and glory through you—this

is proof that you are the most blessed of all generations!” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. People Whose Dispositions Have Changed Are Those Who Have Entered Into the Reality of God’s Words). **“You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do. You must not throw away the truth for the sake of a peaceful family life, and you must not lose your life’s dignity and integrity for the sake of momentary enjoyment. You should pursue all that is beautiful and good, and you should pursue a path in life that is more meaningful. If you lead such a vulgar life, and do not pursue any objectives, do you not waste your life? What can you gain from such a life? You should forsake all enjoyments of the flesh for the sake of one truth, and should not throw away all truths for the sake of a little enjoyment. People like this have no integrity or dignity; there is no meaning to their existence!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). I understood from God’s word that to gain the truth in our duties, we need to forsake the flesh and practice the truth, and finally we’ll be able to cast off our corrupt dispositions and be perfected by God. This is the most meaningful and valuable way to live. To abandon the truth for temporary fleshly comfort is to live without integrity, without dignity, and it is also to lose the work of the Holy Spirit, and finally be abandoned and cast out by God and lose our chance at salvation. I also learned that to resolve the problem of craving fleshly comfort, we need to have hearts that pursue the truth, often reflect on ourselves when things happen, focus our efforts on our duties, and when we encounter difficulties, be able to put aside the flesh, forsake ourselves, and protect the work of the church. This is how to receive the guidance and work of the Holy Spirit. Once I realized these things, my heart felt

brightened, and I swore I would forsake the flesh and use all my efforts in my duties. After that, I conscientiously considered how to preach the gospel well. When principles weren't clear to me, I sought with my brothers and sisters, and I made time to study with everyone else. Later, as those examining the true way became more numerous, there were more things for me to do. Yet I didn't feel like they were so troublesome anymore. Instead, I felt they were things I ought to do and my responsibility. Although I was very busy every day, I felt enriched.

Unexpectedly one day, my leader came to me and asked me to return to making videos. When I heard the news, I was very excited. Apart from being grateful to God, I didn't know what to say. I recalled how I had cared for the flesh, dealt with my duties lightly and muddled through, and I felt especially indebted to God. I couldn't make up for my past mistakes, so I could only be diligent and pay a price in my duties thereafter, and, in fulfilling my duties, repay God's love. Later, when I faced difficulties in my duties, I consciously prayed to God and considered how to resolve them. Once, one of my projects didn't come out very well, and the team leader and supervisor didn't know how to fix it. I was also trapped in difficulty and didn't know how to start fixing it. I thought, "If I keep trying to fix it, spend my time, and work on this, I don't know if I'll be able to make it right, so maybe someone else should do this." I realized those thoughts were me trying to avoid difficulty again, so I quickly prayed to God. I recalled God's words: **"When a duty befalls you, and it is entrusted to you, do not think of how to avoid facing difficulties; if something's difficult to handle, don't put it to one side and ignore it. You must face it head-on. You must remember at all times that God is with people, and they need only pray and seek from Him if they have any difficulties, and that with God, nothing is hard. You must have this**

faith” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God’s word gave me a path of practice. No matter what problems and difficulties we encounter, we should rely on God to seek ways to resolve them. We shouldn’t try to avoid difficulties or shrink from our duties due to fleshly suffering. That way is betrayal of God and disloyalty to one’s duty. Once I realized this, I promised myself that this time I would rely on God and put in the work to fix it. So I calmed down and tried to fix it, and to my surprise the problem was solved in no time. After watching it, everyone felt it was good and had no suggestions. After practicing like this, my heart was peaceful and at ease. I felt that only by paying a price in one’s duty can one have human dignity. Thank God!

19. Seeing That I Was Sick of the Truth

By Allison, USA

One day, I found that a newcomer who just joined the church had already missed two gatherings, so I asked the group leader why this was, but the group leader didn't reply. Later, I saw that the newcomer had started coming to gatherings again, so I didn't ask the group leader for the reason. I thought, "As long as the newcomer attends gatherings regularly, that's fine. I'm so busy with my duty right now, and looking into the details would take a lot of time and effort. I'll ask about it again when I have time." As a result, I forgot about the matter. Later, at another gathering, I noticed that this newcomer left halfway through. I asked the group leader why, but she still didn't answer me, and I never got to the bottom of the matter. I also didn't go to the newcomer to ask if she was having any states or difficulties. After a while, I noticed again that this newcomer hadn't attended several gatherings in a row. This is when I started to worry. I quickly contacted the newcomer, but she wasn't replying. I worried that the newcomer would leave the church, so I quickly contacted the group leader to see if she could get in touch with the newcomer, but the group leader told me, "This newcomer never approved my friend request, so I can't get in touch." I felt a little regret at this point. If I had looked into this earlier, I could have thought of ways to remedy it, but it was too late now. It was all my fault for not following up. I read through the chat records with the newcomer, hoping to know more about her situation. I realized that after saying a few words of greeting to her, I never talked to her about anything else. I didn't know anything about her. I realized the hope of getting this newcomer back was slim. The reason all this had happened was because I was muddling

through. But at the time, I didn't seriously reflect on myself. I just thought about it briefly, admitting that I was a little careless, and moved on.

It didn't take long for the supervisor to ask me about this newcomer, and about why she had left the church. That made me very nervous. I thought, "Uh-oh, I'm about to be exposed. Once the supervisor finds out what really happened, she will definitely say I muddled through my duty and wasn't reliable. What would I do if I was dismissed?" Sure enough, the supervisor pointed out my problem after learning about the situation, saying I was just going through the motions and that I didn't care or try to learn about the newcomer's state. When I heard this, I quickly tried to justify myself, "The newcomer didn't respond to my greeting, so I couldn't continue the conversation." The supervisor dealt with me, saying, "It's not that you couldn't continue the conversation, it's that you didn't care about the newcomer at all." I worried that if I admitted to muddling through, I would have to take responsibility, so I quickly explained, "The group leader was mainly responsible for that newcomer. I thought she was in touch with the newcomer, so I didn't ask about the newcomer's situation in time. I asked the group leader, but she didn't reply in time." I showed the messages I sent to the group leader to the supervisor to prove that I actually cared about the newcomer. I also showed the supervisor the messages I sent to the newcomer later to prove that after I discovered she wasn't coming to gatherings regularly, I tried to get in touch with her in a timely manner, but she hadn't answered me. I even found a reason to say I couldn't reach the newcomer by phone because the gospel preacher hadn't provided the newcomer's phone number. I gave many objective reasons, incessantly shifting the blame, hoping the supervisor would think there was a reason for the problem, that it wasn't my fault, or at least others shared the blame, and that it wasn't all mine. Seeing that I wasn't admitting my problems and was

shirking responsibility, the supervisor dealt with me by saying, “This newcomer has been to several gatherings, which clearly shows she yearns for the truth, but you didn’t ask about her state and difficulties in time, and now you are shirking responsibility by saying you couldn’t contact her because you didn’t have her number. This is pretty unreasonable!” I realized the supervisor saw my problems clearly and I couldn’t avoid taking responsibility. I was worried, and thought, “What will the supervisor think of me? Will she say I don’t do any practical work? Will I be dismissed?” I was very anxious, and I couldn’t calm myself. After that, I went over everything that led to this in my mind, and I realized I wasn’t being an honest person in this matter or accepting pruning and being dealt with. I clearly hadn’t done my duty properly, I had muddled through, and yet I was still playing tricks and making excuses to justify myself. I even tried to blame the gospel preacher for not providing the phone number. I was refusing to admit the fact that I had muddled through my duty, and I didn’t reflect on myself. Thinking of my behavior made me very uncomfortable. Although I ate and drank of God’s word every day, when an actual situation came upon me, and when I was pruned and dealt with, I still lived by my corrupt dispositions and didn’t accept the truth. I felt my corruption was too deep, and I decided it would be difficult for me to change, so I felt a little negative.

Later, I read a passage of God’s words: **“Pursuing the truth is voluntary. If you love the truth, then the Holy Spirit will work in you. When you love the truth; when you pray to and depend on God, reflect on yourself and try to know yourself no matter what persecution or tribulation befalls you; when you actively seek the truth to resolve problems that you discover in yourself, you will be able to perform your duty adequately. In this way, you will be capable of standing firm**

in your testimony. When people love the truth, all of these manifestations come naturally to them. They occur voluntarily, gladly, and without coercion, without any extra conditions attached. If people can follow God in this way, they will ultimately gain the truth and the life, they will enter into the truth reality, and they will live out the image of man. ... Whatever your reason for believing in God, God will ultimately determine your outcome based on whether you have gained the truth. If you have not gained the truth, then none of the justifications or excuses you make will hold water. Try to reason as you like, tie yourself in knots as you please—will God care? Will God converse with you? Will He debate and confer with you? Will He consult you? What is the answer? No. He absolutely will not. No matter how strong your reasoning is, it won't stand up. You must not misunderstand God's intentions, and think that if you offer all sorts of reasons and excuses then you do not need to pursue the truth. God wants you to be able to seek the truth in all environments and in every matter that befalls you, and finally achieve entry into the truth reality and gain the truth. Regardless of what circumstances God has arranged for you, what people and events you encounter, and what environment you find yourself in, you should pray to God and seek the truth in order to face them. These are precisely the lessons you should learn in pursuing the truth. If you always look for excuses to get out of, to evade, to refuse, or to resist these circumstances, then God will give up on you. There is no point in reasoning, or being intractable or difficult—if God does not concern Himself with you, you will lose your **chance at salvation**” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (1)). I saw in God's word that to resolve a corrupt disposition and enter into the truth reality is not difficult. The key is in how people

choose and whether they seek and practice the truth. No matter what the situation, be it pruning and being dealt with, or failures and setbacks, people must be able to reflect to know themselves and actively seek the truth. Once you understand a little, put it into practice, and act according to the truth principles. Do this, and you will see growth and change. However, when you are pruned and dealt with, if you always evade, refuse, and make excuses, you will not only fail to gain the truth, you will also be despised and rejected by God. Looking at myself again, when I was pruned and dealt with, I didn't accept, obey, honestly own up, reflect on my problem, or actively seek the truth to resolve my corrupt disposition. Instead, I delimited myself, became negative, and opposed it. Was I not being unreasonable? This wasn't an attitude of accepting the truth! When I recognized this, I didn't want to live in a negative state and delimit myself. I wanted to seek the truth to resolve my problems. I began to reflect and wondered why I usually spoke so pleasingly, but when I was being pruned and dealt with, I didn't accept it, and became negative and defiant. What disposition did I reveal?

In my seeking, I read two passages of God's word: **"Some people are able to admit that they are devils, Satans, and the offspring of the great red dragon, and they speak very prettily about their self-knowledge. But when they reveal a corrupt disposition and someone exposes them, deals with them, and prunes them, they will try with all their might to justify themselves and they will not accept the truth at all. What is the issue here? In this, these people are exposed utterly. They speak so prettily when they talk about knowing themselves, so why is it that when faced with being pruned and dealt with, they cannot accept the truth? There is a problem here. Is this sort of thing not quite common? Is it easy to discern? It is, in fact. There are quite a few people who**

admit that they are devils and Satans when they speak of their self-knowledge, but do not repent or change afterward. So, is the self-knowledge they speak of true or false? Do they have sincere knowledge of themselves, or is it just a ruse meant to trick others? The answer is self-evident. Therefore, to see whether a person has true self-knowledge, you should not merely listen to them talk about it—you should look at the attitude they have toward being pruned and dealt with, and whether they can accept the truth. That is the most crucial thing. Whoever does not accept being pruned and dealt with has an essence of not accepting the truth, of refusing to accept it, and their disposition is sick of the truth. That is beyond doubt. Some people do not permit others to deal with them, no matter how much corruption they have revealed—no one may prune or deal with them. They are allowed to talk about their own self-knowledge, in any way that they please, but if someone else exposes them, criticizes them, or deals with them, no matter how objective or in accordance with the facts it is, they will not accept it. No matter what kind of outpouring of a corrupt disposition another person exposes in them, they will be extremely antagonistic and keep giving specious justifications for themselves, without even the slightest bit of true submission. If such people do not pursue the truth, there will be trouble” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (1)). “The chief manifestation of being sick of the truth is not just an aversion when people hear the truth. It also includes unwillingness to practice the truth, shrinking back when the time comes to practice the truth, as if the truth has nothing to do with them. When some people fellowship during gatherings, they seem very animated, they like repeating words and doctrines and making lofty statements to mislead and win others over. They seem full of

energy and in high spirits as they do this, and they go on and on endlessly. Others, meanwhile, spend all day from morning to night busy with matters of faith, reading God's words, praying, listening to hymns, taking notes, as if they cannot be apart from God for even a moment. From dawn till dusk, they busy themselves with the performance of their duty. Do these people really love the truth? Do they not have the disposition of being sick of the truth? When can their true state be seen? (When the time comes to practice the truth, they run away, and they are not willing to accept being pruned and dealt with.) **Could this be because they don't understand what they hear or is it because they don't understand the truth that they are unwilling to accept it? The answer is neither of these. They are governed by their nature. This is a problem of disposition. In their hearts, these people know full well that God's words are the truth, that they are positive, and that practicing the truth can bring about changes in people's dispositions and make them able to fulfill God's will—but they do not accept them or put them into practice. This is being sick of the truth"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Knowledge of the Six Kinds of Corrupt Dispositions Is True Self-Knowledge). From God's word, I saw that people have a disposition of being sick of the truth, in which case, they manifest a refusal to accept the truth, a refusal to be pruned or dealt with, and a refusal to practice the truth. I reflected on myself and realized that though I ate and drank of God's words and performed my duty every day, and during gatherings, I could admit I had corrupt dispositions in accordance with God's words, I belonged to Satan, was a child of the great red dragon, and so on. Outwardly, I seemed to accept the truth, but when I was pruned and dealt with for muddling through my duty, I tried to justify myself, shift the blame, and did not admit my own corruption. I realized I was not someone

who accepts or practices the truth at all, and that I exposed the satanic disposition of being sick of the truth in everything. I knew that as a waterer, the minimum requirement is to be responsible and patient. Newcomers still haven't put down roots on the true way, and they are like newborn babies, and they are very fragile in life. If they don't come to gatherings, we have to look into their states, and find a way to water and support them quickly. I understood these principles, but when it came time to practice, suffer, and pay the price, I didn't want to do it. I clearly knew the truth but didn't practice it. Except for the few times I greeted this newcomer, I didn't offer any watering or support. When I found out that she wasn't attending gatherings regularly, I didn't become anxious, think about how I could quickly contact her, or come to understand her problems and difficulties. I was negligent and irresponsible, which caused her to leave the church. Even then, I didn't reflect on myself. When the supervisor pointed out my problems, I tried every means to make excuses for my muddling through, hoping to pin the responsibility on the group leader and gospel preacher. How was this an attitude of accepting and obeying the truth? All I exposed was a disposition of being sick of the truth!

I continued to seek the truth and read another passage of God's word: **"Regardless of the circumstances that cause someone to be dealt with or pruned, what is the most crucial attitude to have toward it? First, you must accept it. No matter who is dealing with you, for what reason, no matter whether it comes across as harsh, or what the tone and wording, you should accept it. Then, you should recognize what you have done wrong, what corrupt disposition you have exposed, and whether you acted in accordance with the truth principles. When you are pruned and dealt with, first and foremost, this is the attitude you should have. And are antichrists possessed of such an attitude? They**

are not; from start to finish, the attitude they exude is one of resistance and aversion. With an attitude like that, can they be quiet before God and modestly accept pruning and being dealt with? That cannot be. So, what will they do, then? First of all, they will vigorously argue and offer justifications, defending and arguing against the wrongs they have done and the corrupt disposition they have revealed, in hopes of winning people's understanding and forgiveness, so that they need not take any responsibility or accept words that deal with them and prune them. What is the attitude they evince when faced with being dealt with and pruned? 'I haven't sinned. I've done nothing wrong. If I made a mistake, there was a reason for it; if I made a mistake, I didn't do so on purpose, I shouldn't have to take responsibility for it. Who doesn't make a few mistakes?' They seize on these statements and phrases, clinging tightly to them and not letting go, but they do not seek the truth, nor do they acknowledge the mistake they have made or the corrupt disposition they have revealed—and they certainly do not admit what their intent and goal were in doing evil. ... No matter how the facts bring their corrupt disposition to light, they do not acknowledge or accept it, but go on with their defiance and resistance. Whatever others say, they do not accept it or acknowledge it, but think, 'Let's see who can outtalk whom; let's see whose mouth is quicker.' This is one sort of attitude with which antichrists regard being dealt with and pruned" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). From what God's word revealed, I saw that when normal people are pruned and dealt with, they can receive it from God, accept and obey, reflect on themselves, and achieve genuine repentance and change. Even if they can't accept it at the moment, afterward, through continuous seeking and reflection, they can learn lessons from being pruned and dealt with. But an

antichrist is sick of and loathes truth by nature. When they are pruned and dealt with, they never reflect on themselves. They only display an attitude of resistance, rejection, and hatred. Reflecting on my behavior, I clearly muddled through and didn't support the newcomer in time, causing her to leave the church. This was already a transgression. Anyone with any conscience or reason would feel miserable and guilty, and reflect on their problems, and not say anything more on the matter. But not only did I not feel indebted, I also didn't admit my own problems. I was faced with such an obvious fact, and yet I still tried to knowingly shirk responsibility, saying at first that the newcomer wasn't answering me, and then that the group leader was irresponsible, and finally, I blamed the gospel preacher, hoping to rid myself of any responsibility and gain the supervisor's understanding. Faced with what God revealed and being pruned and dealt with, I didn't reflect on myself at all. Instead, I resisted, opposed, and found various excuses to justify and defend myself, because I didn't want to take responsibility. In what way did I have any humanity or reason? I saw that what I exposed were dispositions of stubbornness and sickness of the truth. I had no God-fearing heart. I saw that after believing in God for so many years, my disposition had not changed at all, and I felt miserable.

Later, I read a passage of God's words that gave me more knowledge of my problem of not accepting being dealt with and pruned. Almighty God says: **"Antichrists' archetypal attitude toward dealing and pruning is to vehemently refuse to accept or admit it. No matter how much evil they do or how much harm they do to the work of God's house and the life entry of God's chosen people, they do not feel the slightest remorse or that they owe anything. From this point of view, do the antichrists have humanity? Absolutely not. They cause all sorts of damage to God's chosen people and bring harm to the work of the church—God's**

chosen people can see this as clear as day, and they can see antichrists' succession of evil deeds. And yet the antichrists do not accept or acknowledge this fact; they stubbornly refuse to admit that they are in error or that they are responsible. Is this not an indication that they are sick of the truth? Such is the extent to which antichrists are sick of the truth. No matter how much wickedness they commit, they refuse to admit it, and they remain unyielding to the end. This sufficiently proves that antichrists never take the work of God's house seriously or accept the truth. They haven't come to believe in God; they are minions of Satan, come to disturb and disrupt the work of God's house. In antichrists' hearts there are only reputation and status. They believe that if they were to acknowledge their error, then they would have to accept responsibility, and then their status and reputation would be severely compromised. As a result, they resist with the attitude of 'deny until you die.' No matter how people expose or dissect them, they do their utmost to deny it. Whether their denial is deliberate or not, in short, in one regard these behaviors expose the antichrists' nature essence of being sick of and hating the truth. In another regard, it shows how much the antichrists treasure their own status, reputation, and interests. What, meanwhile, is their attitude toward the work and interests of the church? It is one of contempt and irresponsibility. They lack all conscience and reason. Doesn't the antichrists' shirking of responsibility demonstrate these issues? In one regard, shirking responsibility proves their nature essence of being sick of and hating the truth, while in another regard, it shows their lack of conscience, reason, and humanity. No matter how much the brothers' and sisters' life entry is harmed by their disturbance and evildoing, they feel no self-recrimination and could never be upset by this. What sort of

creature is this? Even admission to part of their mistake would count as them having a bit of conscience and reason, but the antichrists do not even have that slight amount of humanity. So what would you say they are? The essence of antichrists is the devil. No matter how much damage they do to the interests of the house of God, they do not see it. They are not remotely saddened by it in their hearts, nor do they reproach themselves, much less feel indebted. This is absolutely not what should be seen in normal people. This is the devil, and the devil is devoid of any conscience or reason” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). From God’s word, I saw that antichrists don’t accept being dealt with or pruned because of their nature of being sick of and loathing the truth, and also because they especially treasure their own interests. Once anything touches on and harms their reputation or status, they do all they can to justify themselves and find reasons to shift the responsibility. Even when their actions harm the interests of the church or the spiritual lives of the brothers and sisters, they feel no reproach or remorse. If they are found to be doing these things, they stubbornly refuse to own up out of fear that admitting responsibility will damage their reputation and status. I saw that antichrists are particularly selfish and despicable, have no humanity, and are essentially devils. When I saw the word “devil,” I felt awful, because my behavior and the dispositions I exposed were the same as an antichrist. I had clearly made a mistake and harmed the church’s work, but I still didn’t admit it. When I was pruned and dealt with, I justified myself and tried to shift the responsibility. It’s not such a smooth process for new believers to accept the gospel—it requires a number of people to pay a price, and to provide watering and sustenance to bring them before God. God is especially responsible for everyone. Out of a hundred sheep, if He loses just one, He will leave the ninety-nine others to find His lost sheep, and He

deeply cherishes every person's life. But when I was responsible for watering newcomers, I treated it carelessly. When I saw that the newcomer wasn't attending gatherings, I didn't worry or care. Sometimes I went through the motions of asking, and in following up on the group leader's work, I muddled through and was irresponsible. When I saw that she didn't reply to me several times, I didn't urgently ask why, I also didn't look into whether she had any problems or difficulties. I treated the newcomer with a careless and irresponsible attitude and didn't take her life seriously at all. But even then, I still didn't feel remorse or guilt, and I didn't try to remedy the matter. When the supervisor pointed out that I muddled through and was irresponsible, I tried my best to argue and justify myself, and looked for reasons to shirk responsibility, because I feared taking responsibility if I admitted my problems, that I would give the supervisor a bad impression, and that I would be dismissed. From start to end, I never considered the work of the church, and I never considered whether the newcomer's life would suffer loss. I only considered whether my own interests would be harmed, and whether I could maintain my image and status. I was especially selfish and despicable, and all I protected were my personal interests. I truly had no humanity, and God detested me. Then, I came before God and prayed, saying, "God, I muddled through in my duty, caused dire consequences, and didn't admit it. What I considered wasn't the life entry of God's chosen people, but my own reputation and status. I truly have no humanity! God, I wish to repent."

Later, I read more of God's words, and found a path of practice. Almighty God says: **"Gaining the truth is not difficult, nor is entering into the truth reality, but if people are always fed up with the truth, are they able to gain it? They cannot. So you must always come in front of God, examine your internal states of being fed up with the truth, see**

what displays of being fed up with the truth you have, and what ways of doing things are being fed up with the truth, and in which things you have an attitude of being fed up with the truth—you must often reflect on these things” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three).

“If you want to follow God and perform your duty well, you must first avoid being impulsive when things do not go your way. Calm down first and be quiet before God, and in your heart, pray to Him and seek from Him. Do not be headstrong; submit first. Only with such a mindset can you bring better resolutions to problems. If you can persevere in living before God, and whatever befalls you, you are able to pray to Him and seek from Him, and face it with a mentality of submission, then it does not matter how many expressions there are of your corrupt disposition, or what transgressions you have previously committed—they can be resolved so long as you seek the truth. No matter what trials befall you, you will be able to stand firm. As long as you have the right mentality, are able to accept the truth, and obey God in accordance with His requirements, then you are entirely capable of putting the truth into practice. Though you may be a little rebellious and resistant at times, and sometimes display defensive reasoning and are unable to submit, if you can pray to God and turn your rebellious state around, then you can accept the truth. Having done so, reflect on why such rebelliousness and resistance arose in you. Find the reason, then seek the truth to resolve it, and that aspect of your corrupt disposition can be purified. After several recoveries from such stumbles and falls, until you can put the truth into practice, your corrupt disposition will gradually be cast off. And then, the truth will reign inside you and become your life, and there will be no further obstacles to your practice of the truth. You will become able to truly submit to God, and you will live out the truth

reality” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). From God’s word, I understood that to resolve the disposition of being sick of the truth, I must often reflect on myself, and examine whether my statements, practices, intentions, attitudes, and opinions show sickness of the truth. When things happen, no matter if they are in line with what I want, I must first calm myself and not resist. If I can’t accept what others say and find myself wanting to look for reasons to justify myself, I need to come before God, pray and seek the truth more, look at what God’s word says, and reflect on myself using God’s word, or seek fellowship with brothers and sisters who understand the truth. This way, I can gradually accept the truth and enter into its realities, and only then, bit by bit, will I be able to cast off my corrupt disposition. Once I understood the path of practice, I resolved to change.

Knowing that not looking into the situation of this newcomer in time was already a transgression, I hurried to turn things around. I checked to see if I had failed to water any newcomers properly I was responsible for. As I was chatting with a newcomer, I found that she didn’t quite understand the truth regarding the Lord’s return and the three stages of God’s work. I asked my leader whether the gospel preacher should fellowship with her, but the leader told me to fellowship with her. Although I knew that quickly resolving newcomers’ problems was my responsibility, I was still very resistant. I wanted to argue back, and I didn’t want to obey. I felt that this had happened because the gospel preacher hadn’t fellowshipped clearly, so why was I responsible for this matter? With so many newcomers, I didn’t have enough time, so it should be the gospel preacher who fellowshipped with her. Then I realized my state was incorrect. In fact, what my leader said was appropriate. The suggestion was correct, so why couldn’t I accept it? Why did I still want to argue back so much? Why couldn’t I obey? So, I

prayed to God, asking Him to guide me in submitting, not considering my carnal interests, and being responsible for the newcomer's life. It occurred to me that everyone's comprehension ability is different. Some people hear a gospel preacher's fellowship and understand it at the time, but it isn't as clear in some aspects later. This requires waterers to fellowship and fill in the gaps. This is harmonious cooperation. As a waterer, I must resolve problems when I find them. I shouldn't be picky, do what's easy, or leave hard problems to others, and I shouldn't only strive to save trouble and be at ease. I shouldn't insist on conditions or make excuses in my duty. If I am assigned a newcomer, it is my responsibility to water them properly, ensure they understand the truth, and lay a foundation on the true way. This is my duty. This is genuinely practicing the truth, and real change. Thinking this, my heart felt brightened. I hurried to find this newcomer and fellowship with her on her problem. As I practiced like this, not only did I feel no resistance, I was quite happy. I understood that practicing the truth is not an outward action. Instead, it means accepting God's words from the heart, practicing the truth principles, and using God's word as criteria for how we see people and matters, act, and behave. This way, our mistaken intentions and views, and our corrupt dispositions will unconsciously be replaced by the truth of God's word.

After that experience, I gained some understanding of my satanic disposition of being stubborn and sick of the truth. I also saw the importance of seeking the truth and acting according to principle in all things. This was entirely the fruit of reading God's words. Thank God!

20. I'll Never Again Complain About My Fate

By Chen Xiao, China

Growing up, my family was relatively poor. We were never guaranteed basic necessities. My mother would often have to ask for grain from our neighbor just to keep us fed, and a lot of the clothes I wore had patches. I would often get picked on and discriminated against, the other kids would say I came from poverty. I felt kind of wronged, and thought I must have a bad fate to have not been born into wealth. In school, I studied hard, thinking: "If I work hard now, I'll test into a university and be able to get a good job, then, surely, my luck will change and I'll live like an elite?" I'd study late into the night, and I ended up ranking high in my class. I thought maybe this was my ticket to a better life. But during middle school, I was diagnosed with severe near-sightedness, as well as cataracts, lazy eye, and astigmatism. I was unable to look after myself and had to drop out of school. At the time, I was completely devastated, and I thought that my life was over, that my fate was set. In my heart, I complained about Heaven's unjustness and thought I had a bad fate. Just like that, I became mired in depression.

After accepting God's last days' work, and seeing how our leader held gatherings in which he fellowshiped on truth to resolve issues, I became envious. I thought to myself: "What a glorious thing it would be if I could become a deacon or leader someday, and resolve brothers and sisters' issues and gain their respect and support." So, I put even more effort into reading God's words, accepted whatever task the church gave me, and endured hardship and difficult work, hoping that one day I, too, could become a leader or deacon. But after several years, I still hadn't been selected for any position. A sister that had accepted this stage of God's work with me was

made leader soon after entering the faith. Seeing this sister fellowshipping God's words in gatherings to resolve issues, I thought to myself: "We accepted this stage of the work together, and not long after coming to God's house, she is already serving as a leader and has gained everyone's respect and support. As for me, no matter how hard I try, I still haven't become a leader. So, I guess I have a bad fate." Sometimes, when the suggestions I made weren't implemented, I would think to myself: "Well, I'll never become a leader anyways, I might as well just follow along in this small group. Be it in my career or God's house, I'm destined to suffer and I'll never distinguish myself in this life." After coming to this conclusion, I gradually became less enthusiastic about reading God's words and pursuing the truth.

Later on, my leader saw that I had some literary talent and had me fulfill a textual duty, I was indescribably happy, thinking I finally had a chance to distinguish myself. I worked extra hours and got some good results in my duty. Soon after that, I was promoted. I was just so happy and felt even more motivated in my duty. But then I developed a problem in my cervical spine, and it got worse, so I wasn't able to do my duty properly. I was forced to head back to my original church and just do what duties I could. I was really depressed: "This cervical spine issue is difficult to cure and can relapse if I overtax myself. With that issue, it will be really hard for me to distinguish myself. I am fated to be unable to fulfill important duties. I just have a bad fate, nothing comes easily. I must have been born under a bad sign, because I'm terribly unlucky!" With this thought in my mind, I became negative and slacked off in my duty, and even delimited myself, thinking my future prospects were grim. Later on, I came before God to reflect on myself: Why was it that I always felt that my fate was bad and

lived in such agony? In my seeking, I came across a passage of God's words that gave me some insight on my state.

Almighty God says: **“One kind of person's emotion of depression may arise from their constant belief in their own terrible fate. Is this not one cause? (It is.) When they were young, they lived in the countryside or in a poor region, their family was not prosperous and, apart from some simple furnishings, they had nothing of much value. They had perhaps one or two sets of clothing that they had to wear even though they had some holes in them, and they could never ordinarily eat good quality food, but instead had to wait for New Year or holidays to eat meat. Sometimes they went hungry and hadn't enough to wear to stay warm and having a big bowl full of meat to eat was a pipedream, and even finding a piece of fruit to eat was difficult. Living in such an environment, they felt different from other people who lived in the big city, whose parents were of means, who could eat anything they wanted and wear anything they wanted, who got everything they wanted right then and there, and who were knowledgeable about things. They'd think, ‘They have such a good fate. Why is my fate so bad?’ They always want to stand out from the crowd and change their destiny. However, it is not so easy to change one's destiny. When one is born into such a situation, though they may try, how much can they change their fate, and how much better can they make it? After they become an adult, they are stopped by obstacles everywhere they go in society, they are bullied everywhere they go, and so they always feel so unfortunate. They think, ‘Why am I so unlucky? Why do I always meet mean people? Life was hard when I was a kid, and that's just how it was. Now that I'm grown, it's still so bad. I always want to show what I can do but I never get a chance. If I**

never get a chance, then so be it. I just want to work hard and earn enough money to live a good life. Why can't I even do that? How can living a good life be so difficult? I don't have to live a life superior to everyone else. I want at least to live the life of a city-dweller and not be looked down on by people, and not be a second- or third-rate citizen. At least when people would call out to me, they wouldn't shout, "Hey you, come here!" At least they would call me by my name and address me respectfully. But I can't even enjoy being addressed respectfully. Why is my fate so cruel? When will it end?' When such a person didn't believe in God, they considered it cruel. After they have begun to believe in God and to see that this is the true way, they then think, 'All that suffering before was worth it. It was all orchestrated and done by God, and God did well. If I hadn't suffered like that, I wouldn't have come to believe in God. Now that I believe in God, if I can accept the truth then my destiny should change for the better. I can now live an equal life in the church with my brothers and sisters, and people call me "Brother" or "Sister," and I am addressed respectfully. I now enjoy the feeling of having the respect of others.' It seems as though their destiny has changed, and it seems that they no longer suffer and they no longer have a bad fate. Once they have begun to believe in God, they set their resolve to perform their duty well in God's house, they become able to endure hardship and work hard, able to endure more than anyone else in any matter, and they strive to win the approval and esteem of most people. They think they may even be chosen to be a church leader, someone in charge, or a team leader, and won't they then be honoring their ancestors and their family? Won't they then have changed their destiny? However, reality does not quite live up to their wishes and they become dejected, and think, 'I've believed in God

for years and I get on very well with my brothers and sisters, but how come whenever it's time to choose a leader, someone in charge, or a team leader, it's never my turn? Is it because I look so plain, or because I haven't performed well enough, and no one has noticed me? Every time there is a vote, I may have a slight hope, and I'd be happy even to be selected as a team leader. I'm so filled with enthusiasm to repay God, but I just end up disappointed every time there is a vote and I'm left out of it all. What's up with that? Could it be that I'm truly only able to be a mediocre person, an ordinary person, someone unremarkable my whole life? When I look back at my childhood, my youth, and my middle-aged years, this path I've trodden has always been so mediocre and I haven't done anything noteworthy. It's not that I don't have any ambition, or that my caliber is too lacking, and it's not that I don't exert enough effort or that I can't endure hardship. I have aspirations and goals, and I can even be said to have ambition. So why is it that I can never stand out from the crowd? In the final analysis, I just have a bad fate and am destined for suffering, and this is how God has arranged things for me.' The more they dwell on it, the worse they think their fate is. In the ordinary course of their duties, if they make some suggestions or express some views and always receive a rebuttal, and no one listens to them or takes them seriously, they become even more depressed, and they think, 'Oh, my fate is so bad! Every group I'm in there is always some mean person blocking my way forward and oppressing me. No one ever takes me seriously and I can never stand out. When all's said and done, it comes back to this: I just have a bad fate!' No matter what happens to them, they always attribute it to them having a bad fate; they constantly put effort into this idea of having a bad fate, they strive to have a deeper understanding and appreciation

of it and, as they turn it over in their minds, their emotions become ever more depressed. When they make a minor mistake in the performance of their duty, they think, ‘Oh, how can I do my duty well when I have such a bad fate?’ In gatherings, their brothers and sisters give fellowship and they think things over and over, but they don’t understand, and they think, ‘Oh, how can I understand things when I have such a bad fate?’ Whenever they see someone who speaks better than they do, who discusses their understanding in a clearer and more illuminated way than them, they feel even more depressed. When they see someone who can endure hardships and pay the price, who sees results in the performance of their duty, who receives the approval of their brothers and sisters and gets promoted, they feel unhappy in their heart. When they see someone become a leader or a worker, they feel even more depressed, and even when they see someone who sings and dances better than they do, and they feel inferior to that person, they get depressed. No matter what people, events, or things they encounter, or whatever situations they come across, they always respond to them with this emotion of depression. Even when they see someone wearing clothes that are a little nicer than theirs or whose hairstyle is a little better, they always feel sad, and jealousy and envy arise in their heart until, finally, they go back to that depressed emotion. What are the reasons they come up with? They think, ‘Oh, isn’t this because my fate is bad? If I was a little better looking, if I was as dignified as they are, if I was tall with a nice figure, with good clothes and lots of money, with good parents, then wouldn’t things be different from how they are now? Wouldn’t people then regard me highly, and be envious and jealous of me? At the end of the day, my fate is bad and I can’t blame anyone else for it. With such a bad fate, nothing goes right for me, and

I can't walk anywhere without falling over something. It's just my bad fate, and there's nothing I can do about it.' Similarly, when they are pruned and dealt with or when brothers and sisters reproach or criticize them, or make suggestions to them, they respond to it with their emotion of depression. Anyhow, whether it is something happening to them or everything around them, they always respond with the various negative thoughts, views, attitudes and standpoints that arise from their emotion of depression” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of

the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). God's words reveal my situation perfectly.

In the past, I thought that living the life of an elite and gaining the respect and support of others meant one had a good fate, while being from a poor family, living a lowly, destitute life and being disrespected by others meant one had a bad fate. I grew up in poverty, and basic necessities were never guaranteed. I wasn't regarded highly by others, and was discriminated against and belittled. So I often thought that I had a bad fate. Having come from this background, I resolved to study hard to change my fate and live the life of an elite. But then, during middle school, I was diagnosed with severe near-sightedness and was forced to discontinue my schooling. So I thought I had no hope of realizing my dreams and felt very disappointed. After joining the faith, I was not satisfied with being just a normal believer, and I sought to become a leader or worker. I thought that by attaining status, I would gain everyone's respect and support and that having status and reputation meant I had a good fate. I worked hard and sought to achieve my goal, but I still hadn't become a leader or worker after a few years. When a sister who accepted this stage of work with me quickly became a leader, I was even more convinced I had a bad fate. Sometimes, when my suggestions were not implemented and I failed to gain people's respect, I wouldn't dare express my views anymore, and would just close myself off,

silently cursing my bad fate. Later, when I was promoted in fulfilling a textual duty, I felt really happy. But then I developed a problem in my cervical spine that affected my ability to do my duty, and was forced to return to my original church and just do what duties I could. I felt so down on my luck, and that, ultimately, I just had a bad fate. I thought I'd never have a chance to distinguish myself again, that I would never be promoted, or given a big role, and would never be supported and respected by others. So, I became depressed and wasn't meticulous in my duty, just going through the motions and getting through the day. I saw that I just sought status and the support and respect of others in all aspects. When things didn't go as I desired, I would complain I had a bad fate, lose enthusiasm for my duty, stop actively sharing my view in gatherings, fail to accept the situations I faced from God and reflect on myself. As a result, my life entry ground to a halt. Wasn't my negative state a kind of silent protest against God? In all my years of faith, I always said everything that happens every day is a result of God's orchestrations and arrangements, but when things didn't go my way, I didn't submit and didn't trust God's sovereignty. Were these not the views of a nonbeliever?

Later on, I kept seeking: Why did I constantly feel that my fate was bad? What was wrong with my view? Then, I came across two passages of God's words: **"God's arrangement of what a person's fate shall be, whether it be good or bad, is not to be viewed or measured with the eyes of man or the eyes of a fortune teller, nor is it to be measured according to how much wealth and glory that person enjoys in their lifetime, or how much suffering they experience, or how successful they are in their pursuit of prospects, fame and fortune. Yet this is precisely the serious mistake made by those who say they have a bad fate, as well as a way of measuring one's fate used by the majority of people. How**

do most people measure their own fate? How do worldly people measure whether a person's fate is good or bad? Primarily, they base it on whether that person's life goes smoothly or not, whether they can enjoy wealth and glory or not, whether they can live a lifestyle superior to others, how much they suffer and how much they have to enjoy during their lifetime, how long they live for, what career they have, whether their life is full of toil or comfortable and easy—these things and more they use to measure whether a person's fate is good or bad. Don't you measure it like this, too? (Yes.) So, when most of you encounter something not to your liking, when times are hard, or you aren't able to enjoy a superior lifestyle, you will think you have a bad fate too, and you will sink into depression" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). "God long ago predestined people's fates, and they are immutable. This 'good fate' and 'bad fate' differ from person to person, and they depend on the environment, on how people feel and what they pursue. That is why one's fate is neither good nor bad. You may live a very hard life, but you might think, 'I'm not looking to live a high-end life. I'm just happy with having enough to eat and enough clothes to wear. Everyone suffers during their lifetime. Worldly people say, "You can't see a rainbow unless it's raining," so there's value in suffering. This isn't so bad, and my fate isn't bad. Heaven above has given me some pain, some trials, and tribulations. That's because He thinks highly of me. This is a good fate!' Some people think that suffering is a bad thing, that it means they have a bad fate, and only a life of no suffering, of comfort and ease, means they have a good fate. Unbelievers call this 'a matter of opinion.' How do believers in God regard this matter of 'fate'? Do we talk about having a 'good fate' or a 'bad fate'? (No.) We don't say things like this. Say you

have a good fate because you believe in God, then if you don't follow the right path in your belief, if you are punished, exposed and cast out, then does that mean you have a good fate or a bad fate? If you don't believe in God, you cannot possibly be exposed or cast out. Unbelievers and religious people don't talk about exposing people or discerning people, and they don't talk about people being cleared out or cast out. It should mean people have a good fate when they are able to believe in God, but if they are punished in the end, does that mean then that they have a bad fate? One minute their fate is good, the next their fate is bad—so which is it? Whether someone has a good fate or not is not something that can be judged, people cannot judge this matter. It is all done by God and everything God arranges is good. It is only that the trajectory of every individual's fate, or their environment, and the people, events, and things they encounter, and the life path they experience during their lives are all different; these things differ from person to person. Every individual's living environment and the environment in which they grow, both of which are arranged for them by God, are all different. The things every individual experiences during their lives are all different. There is no so-called good fate or bad fate—God arranges it all, and it is all done by God. If we regard the matter from the perspective that it is all done by God, everything God does is good and right; it's just that from the perspective of people's predilections, feelings and choices, some people choose to live a comfortable life, choosing to have fame and fortune, a good reputation, to have prosperity in the world and come into their own. They believe that this means they have a good fate, and that a lifetime of mediocrity and being unsuccessful, always living at the bottom of society, is a bad fate. This is how things look from the perspective of unbelievers and

worldly people pursuing worldly things and seeking to live in the world, and this is how the idea of good fate and bad fate arise. The idea of good fate and bad fate only arises from human beings' narrow understanding and superficial perception of fate, and from people's judgments on how much physical suffering they endure, and how much enjoyment, and fame and fortune they gain, and so on. In fact, if we look at it from the perspective of God's arrangement of and sovereignty over the fate of man, there are no such interpretations of good fate or bad fate. Isn't this accurate? (It is.) If you regard the fate of man from the perspective of God's sovereignty, then everything God does is good, and it is what every individual needs. This is because cause and effect play a part in past and present lives, they are predestined by God, God holds sovereignty over them, and God plans and arranges them—mankind has no choice. If we look at it from this standpoint, people shouldn't judge their own fate to be good or bad, right?" (The Word, Vol. 6.

On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). God's words incisively pointed out the absurdity of people's viewpoint of "good" and "bad" fate. People judge their fate based on whether their lives go smoothly, whether they attain status and wealth, and whether or not they achieve fame and fortune. Making determinations based on personal preferences is an unbeliever's view and does not accord with the truth. With God, there is no such thing as a good or bad fate. God determines people's fate based upon their previous and present life. Their fate is predetermined and arranged by God. I realized that my view was no different from an unbeliever's. My whole life I sought wealth and status, to stand out and achieve fame and fortune. I thought attaining respect and support was the sign of a good fate, whereas my average, unremarkable life, living in poverty and failing to attain respect and be taken seriously, was marked by a bad fate. I saw, then,

that my view was mistaken and derived from Satan. This was a limited understanding of fate espoused by unbelievers. I realized that those who achieve fame and great wealth may have honor, glory and the respect and support of others, and seemingly have a good fate, but they are spiritually empty, they suffer, feel that life is boring, and some even end up doing drugs and committing suicide. Emboldened by their own authority, some people cause trouble, commit evil and break laws, and end up behind bars, their reputations ruined. Do such people really have good fates? I saw that a person's fate is not based on whether they enjoyed wealth and glory or how much suffering they went through. God determines and arranges how wealthy or poor someone will be. God predetermines our lives based upon our needs and all His arrangements are good. With God, there is no such thing as a good or bad fate. As for me, despite growing up in poverty, going through hardships and setbacks, and suffering quite a bit, my experiences all hardened my resolve in the face of suffering; this is an incredibly valuable ability for me in my life. What's more, I have too strong of a desire for reputation and status. If I had tested into a university and achieved fame and fortune, I would certainly get swept up in that evil trend. Would I have come before the Creator then and received God's salvation? God also predetermined that I would not be selected as a leader. I had some ability to comprehend God's words, and was able to identify certain issues in my brothers and sisters, but I was not that competent, and couldn't handle larger workloads. Leaders have to handle a lot of work, and if issues aren't handled well, it will be detrimental to the church's work. I now fulfill the duties that I am able to do, this is beneficial to me and the church's work. I have seen the earnest intentions behind the situation God has orchestrated for me. I used to live by these absurd views, desiring to live the life of an elite. Whenever things didn't go my way and live up to my desires, I would

complain about my bad fate, become mired in depression and rebel against God. As a believer, I didn't go by God's words, instead adhering to the mistaken views of unbelievers. I was rebelling and resisting against God! Realizing this, I felt a bit horrified at what I'd done, so I came before God in prayer: "O God! I do not understand the truth and have not submitted to Your sovereignty and arrangements. I am truly arrogant and unreasonable. I'm willing to rectify my absurd views, submit to Your sovereignty and arrangements, and no longer resist You."

Later on, I came across another two passages of God's words that gave me some understanding of the harmful consequences of negative emotions. God's words say: **"Though these people who think they have a bad fate believe in God, and are able to relinquish things, expend themselves and follow God, yet they are likewise unable to perform their duty in God's house in a free, liberated and relaxed way. Why can't they do this? It is because within them they harbor a number of extreme and abnormal thoughts and views which cause extreme emotions to arise in them. These extreme emotions cause the way they judge things, the way they think, and their views on things to come from an extreme, incorrect and fallacious standpoint. They regard issues and people from this extreme and incorrect standpoint, thereby repeatedly living, viewing people and things, and comporting themselves and acting under the effect and influence of this negative emotion. In the end, no matter how they live, they seem so tired that they aren't able to muster up any enthusiasm for their belief in God and pursuit of the truth. Regardless of how they choose to live their life, they cannot positively or actively perform their duty, and despite having believed in God for many years, yet they never focus on performing their duty with all their heart and soul or performing their duty satisfactorily, much less**

do they pursue the truth, of course, or practice in accordance with the truth principles. Why is this? In the final analysis, it's because they always think they have a bad fate, and this leads them to have a profoundly depressed emotion. They become totally dispirited, powerless, like a walking corpse, without any vitality, exhibiting no positive or optimistic behavior, much less any determination or stamina to devote the loyalty they should devote to their duty, their responsibilities, and their obligations. Rather, they struggle reluctantly from day to day with a slipshod attitude, aimlessly and muddle-headedly, even unconsciously getting through the days. They have no idea how long they will muddle along for. In the end, they have no recourse but to admonish themselves, saying, 'Oh, I'll just keep muddling along as long as I can! If one day I can't go on anymore, and the church wants to expel me and cast me out, then they should just cast me out. It's because I have a bad fate!' You see, even what they say is so defeated. This emotion of depression isn't just a simple mood but, more importantly, it has a devastating impact on people's thoughts, hearts, and on their pursuit. If you cannot turn your emotion of depression around in a timely and speedy manner, it will not only affect your whole life, it will also destroy your life and carry you to your death. Even if you do believe in God, you won't be able to gain the truth and attain salvation and, in the end, you will perish" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). "This kind of depression is not a simple or momentary rebelliousness, nor is it the temporary outpouring of a corrupt disposition, much less the outpouring of a corrupt state. Rather, it is a silent resistance to God, and a dissatisfied silent resistance to the fate arranged for them by God. Though it may be a simple negative emotion, the consequences it brings to people are

more serious than those brought by a corrupt disposition. Not only does it prevent you from adopting a positive, correct attitude to the duty you ought to perform, and to your own daily life and life journey but, more seriously, it can also cause you to perish from depression” (The Word, Vol. 6.

On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). Through God’s words, I saw that if someone thinks they have a bad fate, when they believe in God, fulfill their duty and treat people or things they encounter with this mistaken and extreme view, they’re liable to descend into negativity and depression, become muddle-headed in their duties, going through the motions, tuning out and lacking the desire to advance. Becoming mired in depression can lead to a downward spiral, ultimately resulting in destroying any chance at salvation. I saw that if I didn’t abandon this view, the consequences would be extremely dire! I thought of how I lived with this idea of having a bad fate. When I had to discontinue my studies due to my eye problems, my dreams of seeking fame and fortune were shattered, and I wouldn’t be able to live the respectable life of a wealthy person, and so I suffered greatly and lost hope for life. After I became a believer and fulfilled my duty, I still sought high status, and when I wasn’t promoted and wasn’t selected as a leader, I didn’t reflect on my deficiencies, didn’t come to know myself, instead, continually complaining about my bad fate and living in a negative state, unwilling to pursue the truth. Later on, when I developed the issue in my cervical spine, I thought I’d never be able to stand out in the future, and so I slacked off in my duties, resigned myself to failure, and slowly grew distant from God. I saw that this view of having a good or bad fate had tightly bound and fettered me, that I couldn’t submit to God’s sovereignty and arrangements and was ever more resistant. I thought of those unbelievers who were always saying how bad their fates were. Because they were poor and powerless, lived in society’s underclass, failed

to attain the respect of others and were often picked on, they did everything possible to change their fate, but when things didn't go as they hoped, they would think about ending their life. Other unbelievers spent years studying diligently but failed to gain status or wealth and came to think they had a bad fate, some would even become severely depressed and deranged. I saw that when people do not understand the truth and live by absurd views, they do not treat themselves properly and do not view people, events and things correctly, ultimately leading them to sink into depression. These viewpoints are derived from Satan. Satan uses these absurd views to deceive and harm people, causing them to become depressed, degenerate, to not pursue the truth and, ultimately, to be cast out. Having understood all that, I realized I could no longer see things by this view of there being good and bad fates. If I continued in that way, I'd do myself in. So, I came before God in prayer: "O God! Every situation You orchestrate is done with earnest intentions and I will submit to them. I will resolve my corruption while doing my duty and will seek to improve in my duty."

In my seeking, I came across this passage of God's words: **"What attitude should people have toward fate? You should comply with the Creator's arrangements, actively and strenuously seek the Creator's purpose and meaning in His arrangement of all these things and achieve understanding of the truth, bring into play your greatest functions in this life God has arranged for you, perform the duties, responsibilities, and obligations of a created being, and make your life more meaningful and more of value, until finally the Creator is pleased with you and remembers you. Of course, what would be even better would be to attain salvation through your seeking and strenuous effort—this would be the best outcome. In any case, with regard to fate, the most appropriate attitude created mankind should have is not one of**

wanton judgment and circumscription, or using extreme methods to deal with it. Of course, much less should people try to resist, choose, or change their fate, but rather they should use their heart to appreciate it, and seek, explore, and comply with it, before facing it positively. Finally, in the living environment and on the journey set for you in life by God, you should seek the way of conduct God teaches you, seek the path God requires you to take, and experience the fate God has arranged for you in this way, and in the end, you will be blessed. When you experience the fate the Creator has arranged for you in this way, what you come to appreciate is not only sorrow, sadness, tears, pain, frustration, and failure but, more importantly, you will experience joy, peace, and comfort, as well as the enlightenment and illumination of the truth which God bestows on you. What's more, when you become lost along your path through life, when you are faced with frustration and failure, and you have a choice to make, you will experience the Creator's guidance, and in the end you will attain the understanding, experience and appreciation of how to live the most meaningful life"

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). Through God's words, I comprehended His will and saw how kind is God's heart. Even though we will face hardships and disappointments in our lives, that does not mean we should try to resist or change our fate. Rather, we must submit to what God has predetermined, learn from the people, events and things God orchestrates for us and gain the truth. Only then will we find true peace and comfort. I thought about how it was with God's permission that I was not selected as leader. I did not possess good work skills and was more suited to do a single duty, to be a regular follower, that was the best position for me. Now the church has assigned me to a watering duty. Through this duty, I've read a lot of God's words about knowing His work, I've come to

grasp certain principles regarding gospel spreading and discerning people, I've gained some knowledge of my corrupt disposition and I am now able to submit to the situations that God orchestrates for me. These are all real benefits and are the most precious of all riches. Now I realize that our entire lives are arranged and predetermined by God. Only by submitting, pursuing and gaining the truth in all kinds of situations, achieving dispositional transformation and attaining God's salvation can we truly have a good fate. After that, I acted according to God's words, fulfilling my duty with loyalty and devotion, and reflecting on myself and learning from setbacks and failures. Practicing in this way brought me peace and joy.

Recently, our leader has asked us to recommend talented brothers and sisters, and I thought to myself: "It would be a proud moment to receive a promotion. I could contribute to the expansion of the kingdom gospel, and the others would certainly envy and look up to me when they heard I'd been promoted." However, the leader said to me that due to my illness, I wasn't fit to fulfill a duty that required my going out. I felt a bit depressed and complained to myself: "All my brothers and sisters seem healthy, and they can be promoted and have more chance to practice, while I just have to stay at home and have no chance to stand out or attain glory. I just have a bad fate." As these thoughts began to crop up, I realized I was living in a bad state again, so I came before God in prayer and seeking. I saw these words of God: **"Status is not ordained for people by God; God provides people with the truth, the way, and the life, and ultimately makes them become an acceptable created being, a small and insignificant created being—not someone who has status and prestige and is revered by thousands of people. And so, no matter what perspective it is viewed from, the pursuit of status is a dead end. No matter how reasonable your excuse for pursuing status is, this path is still the wrong one, and is not**

approved of by God. No matter how hard you try or how great the price you pay, if you desire status, God will not give it to you; if it's not given by God, you will fail in fighting to obtain it, and if you keep fighting there will only be one outcome: You will be revealed and cast out, which is a dead end. You understand this, yes?" (The Word, Vol. 4.

Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). **"The house of God has cast out many antichrists and evil people, and some who pursue the truth, after seeing the failure of antichrists, reflect on the path that those people took, and also reflect on and know themselves. From this, they gain an understanding of God's will, resolve to be ordinary followers, and focus on pursuing the truth and doing their duty well. Even if God says they are service-doers or lowly nobodies, it's fine by them. They will just try to be lowly people, and small, insignificant followers in God's eyes, who will ultimately end up being called acceptable created beings by God. People like this are the good ones and those that God approves of"** (The

Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). Through God's words, I realized that man is just a small and insignificant creature of God that lacks any real status. As a sensible person, I should be practical and stick to my place, seek to gain the truth, and transform my life disposition, as this is what God commends. If I constantly sought reputation and status, I would ultimately be cast out by God. I thought of those that I used to admire and respect as people with good fates, like Zhao Xue, a previous partner of mine. She was gifted, a great speaker, and was promoted to an important position. But while fulfilling her duty, she always sought reputation and status, which severely disrupted the church's work. When she was replaced, she didn't repent, and was expelled for doing all kinds of evil. Her failure was a warning to me. I saw that when people don't pursue the truth and always strive for reputation and status, they will be exposed and cast out.

Because I couldn't do duties that required going out due to my condition, I started complaining to myself; this was my desire for reputation and status rearing its head again. I thought I could stand out by going out to do duties and that this would mean I had a good fate. I was still seeking reputation and status and walking a path in opposition to God. It is God's will that I exist as His creature; no matter whether I go out or stay at home, I can always fulfill my duty and pursue the truth and dispositional transformation. I knew I should submit to God's orchestrations and earnestly fulfill my duty, only this would put me at ease.

Through this experience, I gained some knowledge of my mistaken views, and I have seen how my complaining about my supposed bad fate is rebellion against God and a refusal to submit to His sovereignty and arrangements. If I continued like that, I would lose my chance at salvation. Going forward, I'm resolved to put aside my mistaken views, submit and fulfill my duty well.

21. Escaping Vanity Isn't Easy

By Hailey, Japan

In July of 2020, my supervisor arranged for me to take on Sister Iris's work and make videos. I was very happy, but I also realized I would encounter some problems and difficulties in my new duty, so I would have to learn and ask when I didn't understand. But as Iris handed over her work to me, she said she had a new duty with a high workload, and wanted to finish with me quickly. I could tell she didn't plan to wait until I mastered the work to leave. I couldn't help but worry, "I'm not familiar with this work, can I really take it over all at once?" Iris asked me if I had any difficulties. I was just about to express my concerns, but then I thought, "I've just met her, and first impressions are important. She is in a hurry to take over her new duty, so I can't hold her back. If I ask about difficulties and make demands before I start the work, what will she think of me? Won't she think I'm taking on her job without understanding anything, and that I'm the wrong person for the job?" So, against my will, I said, "No questions." To prove I had caliber and could discover problems, I also made some suggestions about the professional processes she introduced to me. At the time, I realized I was deliberately covering up my shortcomings. If she mistakenly thought I had good caliber and shortened the time she taught me, what if my slow mastery of the work delayed things? But then I thought that since I'd already said it, I couldn't take the words back. I could ask her for help if I had problems in the future.

The next day, Iris told me that in the future, Sister Josie would be my partner. She said Josie started making videos less than a month ago, that she learned quickly, and now she could do her duty independently. Later, when I discussed work with Josie, she explained the workflow to me very

skillfully, and discussed with me how to divide labor, cooperate, and so on. She certainly seemed like she knew what she was doing. I knew I was less competent than Josie, but to stop Iris from seeing the gap between me and Josie, I became very cautious around her, and I worried about exposing my shortcomings. When I had problems I couldn't solve, I tried to read as much information as possible and solve them myself instead of asking her. Although I worked hard, my progress was slow. When our leader came to look into our work, there were many details I couldn't grasp. Josie answered nearly all of our leader's questions. This made me depressed, and I felt like I was useless. Soon, more than a week had passed, and because I still couldn't work independently, Iris hadn't been able to leave and start her new duty. This made me even more embarrassed and made me feel weak, but I was still totally unwilling to open up to Iris about my state, worrying that if she learned I easily got depressed because I didn't learn fast, she might think my stature was small, my caliber was low, and that I was incompetent. During that time, I didn't want to let anyone see my terrible state. I just wanted to get familiar with things and start work as soon as possible, so Iris could finally leave and I didn't have to embarrass myself in front of her every day. But my growth was still very slow, and I couldn't feel God's guidance at all. In pain, I came before God to pray and seek, and asked God to help me know myself.

One day, I read in God's word: **“What kind of disposition is it when people always put up a front, always whitewash themselves, always put on airs so that others think highly of them, and cannot see their faults or shortcomings, when they always try to present their best side to people? This is arrogance, fakery, hypocrisy, it is the disposition of Satan, it is something evil”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One's Conduct). **“People themselves are created**

beings. Can created beings achieve omnipotence? Can they achieve perfection and flawlessness? Can they achieve proficiency in everything, come to understand everything, see through everything, and be capable of everything? They cannot. However, within humans, there are corrupt dispositions, and a fatal weakness: As soon as they learn a skill or profession, people feel that they are capable, that they are people with status and worth, and that they are professionals. No matter how unexceptional they are, they all want to package themselves as some famous or exceptional individual, to turn themselves into some minor celebrity, and make people think they are perfect and flawless, without a single defect; in the eyes of others, they wish to become famous, powerful, or some great figure, and they want to become mighty, capable of anything, with nothing they cannot do. They feel that if they sought others' help, they would appear incapable, weak, and inferior, and that people would look down on them. For this reason, they always want to keep up a front. Some people, when asked to do something, say they know how to do it, when they actually do not. Afterward, in secret, they look it up and try to learn how to do it, but after studying it for several days, they still do not understand how to do it. When asked how they are getting on with it, they say, 'Soon, soon!' But in their hearts, they're thinking, 'I'm not there yet, I have no idea, I don't know what to do! I must not let the cat out of the bag, I must continue putting on a front, I can't let people see my shortcomings and ignorance, I can't let them look down on me!' What problem is this? This is a living hell of trying to save face at all costs. What kind of disposition is this? Such people's arrogance knows no bounds, they have lost all sense. They do not wish to be like everyone else, they don't want to be ordinary people, normal people, but superhumans,

exceptional individuals, or hotshots. This is such a huge problem! With regard to the weaknesses, shortcomings, ignorance, foolishness, and lack of understanding within normal humanity, they will wrap it all up, and not let other people see it, and then keep on disguising themselves”

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five Conditions That Must Be

Met to Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God). God’s word precisely revealed my

state. After I took over the job, all I thought about was how to master the

work as soon as possible, so that everyone could see I had good caliber and

was able to work. When I took over, I learned that Iris was in a hurry to

leave. I obviously couldn’t master so many professional processes in such a

short period, but even something like, “I can’t remember that much, I’d like

you to teach me a few more days,” was something I didn’t dare say. I even

played tricks and deliberately made suggestions to my sister to prove I had

professional caliber. I didn’t want Iris to see that I was inferior to Josie, so I

covered up and disguised myself even more, and I was very cautious around

Iris because I feared inadvertently exposing my shortcomings. Because this

was the moment to take over the job, the leader and my brothers and sisters

were all watching how I performed, and I worried that once my caliber and

true stature were exposed, people would look down on me. If the leader

noticed I had no caliber and wasn’t suitable to make videos and removed

me, that would be very embarrassing. So, I didn’t want to ask when I had

questions and difficulties. I always covered myself up and disguised myself

this way, so how could I make progress? When people start a new duty,

everything is unfamiliar, so it’s normal for there to be many things they

don’t understand. On top of that, my work abilities were lacking, so I

needed to ask questions and seek more, but I was far too arrogant. I wanted

to prove that I was fine on my own and could handle the work, so I always

pretended to understand things and disguised myself, which hindered my

understanding of things, delayed the handing over of work, and made it impossible for Iris to leave. What I did was actually harmful. I delayed our work and didn't once feel guilty, all the while worrying that people would see my true ability or that I would be looked down on. I was completely unreasonable.

Later, I found a path of practice in God's word. Almighty God says: **"You must seek the truth to resolve any problem that arises, no matter what it is, and by no means disguise yourself or put on a false face for others. Your shortcomings, your deficiencies, your faults, your corrupt dispositions—be completely open about them all, and fellowship about them all. Do not keep them inside. Learning how to open yourself up is the first step toward life entry, and it is the first hurdle, which is the most difficult to overcome. Once you have overcome it, entering the truth is easy. What does taking this step signify? It means that you are opening your heart and showing everything you have, good or bad, positive or negative; baring yourself for others and for God to see; hiding nothing from God, concealing nothing, disguising nothing, free of deceit and trickery, and being likewise open and honest with other people. In this way, you live in the light, and not only will God scrutinize you, but other people will also be able to see that you act with principle and a degree of transparency. You do not need to use any methods to protect your reputation, image, and status, nor do you need to cover up or disguise your mistakes. You do not need to engage in these useless efforts. If you can let these things go, you will be very relaxed, you will live without shackles or pain, and you will live entirely in the light. Learning how to be open when you fellowship is the first step to life entry. Next, you need to learn to analyze your thoughts and actions to see which are wrong and which God does not like, and you**

need to reverse them immediately and rectify them. What is the purpose of rectifying them? It is to accept and take on board the truth, while getting rid of the things within you that belong to Satan and replacing them with the truth. Before, you did everything according to your crafty disposition which is lying and deceitful; you felt that you could get nothing done without lying. Now that you understand the truth, and despise Satan's ways of doing things, you no longer act that way, you act with a mentality of honesty, purity, and obedience. If you hold nothing back, if you do not put on a front, a pretense, or cover things up, if you lay yourself bare to the brothers and sisters, do not hide your innermost ideas and thoughts, but instead allow others to see your honest attitude, then the truth will gradually take root in you, it will blossom and bear fruit, it will yield results, little-by-little. If your heart is increasingly honest, and increasingly oriented toward God, and if you know to protect the interests of God's house when you perform your duty, and your conscience is troubled when you fail to protect these interests, then this is proof that the truth has had an effect in you, and has become your life" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

Part Three). After reading God's words, I realized if you have shortcomings or a corrupt disposition, and always disguise yourself to create an illusion for others, this is cunning and deceitful, and is done out of a satanic nature. If you do this, you will never enter into the truth. I should be bare and open about both my good and bad sides, and I should be honest with other people and God. This way, my heart would become more and more honest, I could live in God's presence, my problems and deviations could be reversed in time, and it could prevent me from taking the mistaken path of pursuing fame and status. After I had the path of practice, I opened up and talked to Iris about my state. Unexpectedly, Iris said, after I opened up, she also

realized she hadn't fulfilled her responsibilities. She was only thinking about taking over her new duty, so she hadn't properly handed over the work. She also said she would leave only after I understood things. I was very moved when I heard this. I experienced how, by opening up and showing others your own shortcomings and deficiencies, you can get their help and support, you can partner with them in your duties, and more importantly, you can do things with an honest and obedient attitude. This is living in God's presence and being responsible with my duty, which can earn God's approval. After that, I truthfully told my sister about my grasp of the work, and she helped me in a targeted manner, which taught me a lot. I also realized the reason why it was so hard for me to do my duty, which was that I wanted to get familiar with and master the work all at once to prove I had the ability to do the work, which made me lose the ability to prioritize tasks and delayed my progress. After that, I categorized the work in order of importance and urgency, so I could do things in a targeted and organized manner, and I quickly became familiar with the work. Through this experience, I tasted the sweetness of practicing the truth. I also saw the importance of having the right intentions and an honest attitude in my duty. Only in this way can I gain God's guidance and blessings. After that, when I encountered problems I didn't understand, I proactively sought with my brothers and sisters to find solutions. After practicing this way for a while, I thought my desire for reputation and status had lessened, and in my practice of opening up and being an honest person, I achieved some entry. But soon, I denied my view of myself.

About a month later, because I wasn't up to the job, and the workload was less, my leader arranged for me to go back to my previous job of watering newcomers. This felt very embarrassing, and I didn't want to face the brothers and sisters I used to water newcomers with. I wanted to escape

and preach the gospel instead, but returning to my job of watering newcomers was set in stone. I felt like a deflated ball, with my head slumped, unable to lift myself up. A sister near me saw that my state wasn't right, sent me a passage of God's word about obedience, and said she wanted to chat with me. I was immediately on alert, "Did my sister see I was in a bad state? Would she look down on me if she knew I was cut from my previous group? If she knew I was negative because I couldn't let go of my image, would she think I believed in God for years without gaining any of the truth realities? Would she think I was someone who didn't pursue the truth?" So, I politely defended myself, "Now that video work no longer needs so many people, I would have been transferred sooner or later. Sister Melanie was also transferred back." I mentioned Melanie because she originally supervised watering work, and if she was back, it was normal that I was back too. After my sister heard this, she didn't ask anything more. I told myself that at this juncture, I couldn't be weak. I had to be strong and actively perform my duty, so that everyone could see I didn't mind being transferred, and that I could submit to it. I tried my best to disguise myself and pretend to be strong, but I actually felt miserable and depressed. Sometimes I thought of how I rejected my sister's help and I regretted it, "She kindly offered me help, so why did I reject her to protect my image? Why couldn't I simply open up to her?"

Later, a passage of God's word sent by a sister gave me some insight into my state. Almighty God says: **"Corrupt human beings are good at disguising themselves. No matter what they do or what corruption they put on display, they always have to disguise themselves. If something goes wrong or they do something wrong, they want to put the blame on others. They want credit for good things to go to themselves, and blame for bad things to go to others. Is there not a lot of disguising like this in**

real life? There is too much. Making mistakes or disguising oneself: which of these relates to disposition? Disguising is a matter of disposition, it involves an arrogant disposition, evil, and treachery; it is especially disdained by God. In fact, when you disguise yourself, everyone understands what is happening, but you think others do not see it, and you try your best to argue and justify yourself in an effort to save face and make everyone think you did nothing wrong. Is this not stupid? What do others think about this? How do they feel? Sick and disgusted. If, having made a mistake, you can treat it correctly, and can allow everyone else to talk about it, permitting their commentary and discernment about it, and you can open up about it and analyze it, what will everyone's opinion of you be? They will say you are an honest person, for your heart is open to God. Through your actions and behavior, they will be able to see your heart. But if you try to disguise yourself and deceive everyone, people will think little of you, and say you are a fool and an unwise person. If you do not try to put on a pretense or justify yourself, if you can admit your mistakes, everyone will say you are honest and wise. And what makes you wise? Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone has faults and flaws. And actually, everyone has the same corrupt disposition. Do not think yourself more noble, perfect, and kind than others; that is being utterly unreasonable. Once people's corrupt dispositions and the essence and true face of their corruption are clear to you, you will not try to cover up your own mistakes, nor will you hold other people's mistakes against them—you will be able to face both correctly. Only then will you become insightful and not do foolish things, which will make you wise. Those who are not wise are foolish people, and they always dwell on their minor mistakes while sneaking around behind the scenes. It is disgusting to witness. In

fact, what you are doing is immediately obvious to other people, yet you are still blatantly putting on a show. To others, it has the appearance of a clownish performance. Is this not foolish? It really is. Foolish people do not have any wisdom. No matter how many sermons they hear, they still do not understand the truth or see anything for what it really is. They never get off their high horse, thinking they are different from everyone else and more respectable; this is arrogance and self-righteousness, this is foolishness” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One’s Conduct). I was the fool revealed in God’s word, always performing in front of others, just like a clown. During those days, due to my transfer, I thought I lost fame and status, and developed misunderstandings and negativity. My sister wanted to help me, but I didn’t open up to seek the truth with her to solve my problems and difficulties. Instead, I immediately put my guard up. I was suspicious that she saw I was negative and disobedient, so I tried to figure out how to cover up my weakness and smooth things over for myself. I was so deceitful! Although I deceived my sister by doing this, and my image was preserved, I couldn’t get support and help from her. My negative state couldn’t be resolved in a timely manner, and I lived in darkness and pain. Wasn’t this foolish? I did it to myself, and I deserved to suffer! In all my years of believing in God, my corrupt disposition hadn’t changed much, and whenever my image or status was involved, I would always involuntarily cover myself up and disguise myself. I never confided in my brothers and sisters, and I passed every day in darkness like a prisoner in bondage to Satan. I was miserable and weak, and I couldn’t escape. I was truly pitiful! I prayed to God over and over, “God, I always disguise myself in order to be admired, and I live in misery. Please help me and lead me so that I can understand and hate myself and genuinely repent and change.”

One day, I read a passage of God's word revealing antichrists. Almighty God says: **"Regardless of the context, no matter what duty they perform, the antichrist will try and give the impression that they aren't weak, that they are always strong, full of confidence, never negative. They never reveal their real stature or real attitude toward God. In fact, in the depths of their heart, do they really believe there is nothing they cannot do? Do they genuinely believe that they are without weakness, negativity, or outpourings of corruption? Absolutely not. They are good at putting on an act, adept at hiding things. They like showing people their strong and honorable side; they don't want them to see the side of them that is weak and true. Their purpose is obvious: It is, quite simply, to keep face, to protect the place they have in people's hearts. They think that if they open up before others about their own negativity and weakness, if they reveal the side of them that is rebellious and corrupt, this will be grievous damage to their status and reputation—more trouble than it's worth. So they would rather keep their weakness, rebelliousness, and negativity strictly to themselves. And if a day does come when everyone sees the side of them that is weak and rebellious, when they see that they are corrupt, and have not changed at all, they will still keep putting on an act. They think that if they admit to having a corrupt disposition, to being an ordinary person, someone who is small and insignificant, then they will lose their place in people's hearts, will lose everyone's veneration and adoration, and thus will have utterly failed. And so, whatever happens, they will not simply open up to people; whatever happens, they will not give their power and status to anyone else; instead, they try as hard as they can to compete, and will never give up. ... They never reveal their weaknesses to the brothers and sisters, nor do they ever recognize their**

own deficiencies and shortcomings; instead, they do their utmost to cover them up. People ask them, ‘You’ve believed in God for so many years, have you ever had any doubts about God?’ They reply, ‘No.’ They are asked, ‘Have you ever regretted giving up everything in expenditure for God?’ They reply, ‘No.’ ‘When you were ill and miserable, did you miss home?’ And they reply, ‘Never.’ So you see, antichrists portray themselves as staunch, strong-willed, and able to forsake and suffer, as someone who is simply flawless and without any faults or problems. If someone points out their corruption and shortcomings, treats them equally, as a normal brother or sister, and opens up and fellowships with them, how do they treat the matter? They do their utmost to vindicate and justify themselves, to prove they are correct, and ultimately to make people see that they have no problems, and that they are a perfect, spiritual person. Is it not all a pretense? Any who think themselves flawless and holy are, all of them, imposters. Why do I say all of them are imposters? Tell Me, is there anyone flawless amid corrupt humanity? Is there anyone who is truly holy? (No.) Of course not. How can man achieve flawlessness when they are so deeply corrupted by Satan and, besides, not innately possessed of the truth? Only God is holy; all corrupt humanity is defiled. If a person were to present themselves as holy, saying they were flawless, what would that person be? They would be a devil, Satan, the archangel—they would be a bona fide antichrist. Only an antichrist would claim to be a flawless and holy person” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Ten)). After reading God’s word, I felt very distressed. To maintain their position and image among people, antichrists use disguise and falsity to deceive and mislead people, and make themselves appear to be perfect and spiritual people that never feel weakness or expose corruption. They do this

to occupy a position among people and make people look up to them. I looked at my behavior and saw that it was the same as an antichrist. I always pretended and disguised myself when I spoke and acted. When I made a video, I didn't open up to seek about my questions and difficulties, and I preferred to delay work to maintain my status and image. When I was transferred, I feared my sister would find out I had been cut, and that she would look down on me, so I made an excuse to cover up the facts, and I tried to make others think I had returned because of work needs. My method was despicable! I also reflected on the fact that no matter whether I was having difficulties or negativity, I rarely opened up for fear of being looked down upon, and even if I did, it was only perfunctory. Most of the time, I only talked about my positive practice to make people think I had stature and could practice the truth once I understood it. I worked so hard to manage my own image and status, all I said and did were disguise and pretense. When I faced failures and setbacks, I tried to show greater stature than others to make people look up to me. I thought of the antichrists expelled from the church. There were many of them who often spoke words and doctrines, shouted slogans, and disguised themselves as devoted pursuers of truth, as if they hadn't been corrupted by Satan. Even though they were admired and worshiped for a while, their nature was of disliking and despising the truth, and eventually, because of their doing much evil, they were revealed and cast out by God. God tolerates no offense to His disposition. God condemns such hypocrites, and He doesn't save such people at all. If I refused to pursue the truth, and always disguised myself based on my satanic disposition, it wasn't just a matter of harming my life. I would be condemned and cast out by God! I realized my state was very dangerous. I didn't want to be hypocritical anymore. I just wanted to repent and change.

In the days that followed, I consciously searched for parts of God's word related to being an honest person. One passage I found said: **"Regardless of what befalls you, if you want to tell the truth and be an honest person, you must be able to let go of your pride and vanity. When you don't understand something, say that you don't understand; when you are unclear about something, say you are unclear. Do not be afraid of others looking down on you or thinking less of you. By consistently speaking from the heart and telling the truth in this way, you will find joy, peace, and a sense of freedom and liberation in your heart, and vanity and pride will no longer rule over you. No matter who you interact with, if you can express what you truly think, open your heart to others, and not pretend to know things you don't, then that is an honest attitude. Sometimes, people may look down on you and call you foolish because you always tell the truth. What should you do in such a situation? You should say, 'Even if everyone calls me foolish, I resolve to be an honest person, and not a deceitful one. I will speak truthfully and according to the facts. Although I am filthy, corrupt, and worthless before God, I will still tell the truth without pretense or disguise.' If you speak in this way, your heart will be steady and at peace. To be an honest person, you must let go of your vanity and pride, and in order to speak the truth and express your true feelings, you should not fear the ridicule and contempt of others. Even if others treat you like a fool, you should not argue or defend yourself. If you can practice the truth in this way, you can become an honest person"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). God's word gave me a path of practice. No matter what corruption or weakness we have, or if there are things we don't understand, and no matter what others think, only by opening up about

ourselves, seeking the truth, and pursuing being an honest person can we gradually escape the bondage and control of our corrupt dispositions, and live with freedom and release. I swore to myself that I was ready to practice according to God's word and pursue being a simple and open person. After returning to watering newcomers, I no longer disguised myself the way I used to. At gatherings, I opened up to my brothers and sisters about my real state during this period. Although I exposed the ugly fact of how I maintained my image and status to everyone, at least they knew about my real state. By doing this, it was as if a heavy burden had been lifted from my heart, and I felt a great sense of release and ease. Also, my brothers and sisters didn't look down on me, and they were able to learn some lessons from my experience. My leader fellowshiped, helped, and supported me after learning about my state, which gave me some awareness of the dangers and consequences of my pursuit of fame and status.

Through this experience, I realized that being honest instead of disguising myself represents an attitude of true repentance before God. Only by practicing the truth and being an honest person can the road become ever wider and brighter.

22. Why Am I Afraid to Report on Problems?

By Kristina, USA

In 2011, while serving as a gospel deacon, I noticed that my leader Zhang Min would often show off by speaking of doctrines. I knew this was detrimental to the brothers and sisters and to herself, so I pointed out the issue to her as I saw it. To my surprise, she had me replaced just a week later and told the brothers and sisters it was because I was vying with her for status. Later on, Zhang Min was exposed as an antichrist and expelled for attacking and avenging people, doing all manner of evil and not seeking to repent. Only after that was I allowed to fulfill my duty again. Having gone through that, I told myself: “I’ve got to watch my mouth going forward. Speak less, do more and don’t meddle in others’ affairs. I absolutely can’t say whatever is on my mind like before. If I happen to run up against another antichrist and accidentally offend them and end up being suppressed and replaced, I won’t be able to fulfill my duty yet again. Then what chance will I have at salvation?” After that, I was very cautious and prudent when interacting with others.

Later on, I was partnered with Liu Xiao to take charge of the gospel work. During gatherings, I noticed that Liu Xiao would only fellowship on positive aspects of her entry, as if she’d already worked through a lot of issues and already had very good stature. I never once heard her dissect or display knowledge of her own corruption. I couldn’t help but say to her: “We’ve known each other for so long, but I’ve never once heard you discuss your self-knowledge.” To my surprise, Liu Xiao became very upset and adopted a severe expression. She sternly replied: “We can’t only have knowledge of ourselves; all the knowledge of ourselves is useless if we don’t have dispositional transformation! Who can’t speak of self-knowledge

these days? Have any of them transformed?” From this, it seemed to me that her understanding was distorted. The key to dispositional transformation is self-knowledge; if you lack knowledge of your own corruption, how will you transform? She didn’t accept the judgment and chastisement of God’s words and didn’t reflect on herself based on God’s words. How could she make such ridiculous comments? So, I told her about my understanding based on God’s words, but not only was she not accepting, she shot back: “I often hear you discussing self-knowledge, but have you transformed? If you know yourself, why do you still reveal corruption?” I felt like she had a very distorted understanding and didn’t accept the truth. After that, Liu Xiao’s attitude toward me changed. She would ignore me, and rarely ever spoke to me, all of which made me feel quite constrained. Seeing that Liu Xiao had a distorted understanding and didn’t accept other people’s suggestions, I thought she wasn’t so suited to be a supervisor, and I thought about reporting her issue to the leader, but then I thought: “Liu Xiao is a long-time believer and has been spreading the gospel all along, and our leader also regards her highly. I’ve only just started in this duty; if I report Liu Xiao’s issue, what will the leader think of me? Would she say I was jealous of Liu Xiao and was nitpicking? Forget it, the less trouble the better. I’d better look after myself first. Her lack of self-knowledge and distorted understanding is her problem and has nothing to do with me. Going forward, I’ll just avoid discussing my understanding of myself in front of her. That way she can’t pick at my flaws and get me in trouble.”

Later on, the CCP launched a large, coordinated crackdown on believers and Liu Xiao stopped spreading the gospel due to being timid and afraid. A few days later, our leader wrote to ask us on our progress in the gospel work and encouraged us to do our best to keep spreading the gospel

as long as it was safe. Liu Xiao said: "It's a dangerous situation right now. What if we were to be arrested while spreading the gospel? Our leader is making a questionable call here; this isn't the first time she made problematic decisions." Liu Xiao's criticism also influenced my opinion of the leader. I thought: "What if someone got arrested while spreading the gospel? Who would take responsibility? Perhaps we should hold off for a bit." Just like that, the gospel work ground to a halt for over a month. The leader wrote us another letter stressing the importance of the gospel work and emphasizing that the gospel work is God's commission and must never stop. Even in adverse situations such as these, it was still possible to spread the gospel to close acquaintances, relatives and friends. The leader also asked why we had stopped our gospel work. Upon reading the letter, I realized that we'd gotten off track in our practice, but when I showed the letter to Liu Xiao, she seemed indifferent and not in the least concerned, and she had no intention of rectifying our mistakes. Observing Liu Xiao's attitude, I thought to myself: "If she won't spread the gospel, then I'll go myself." With that, I went and fellowshiped with the brothers and sisters about rectifying our mistakes. Liu Xiao would just stay in her room all day and never really checked in on the gospel work. Sometimes she'd even watch TV for hours on end. I really wanted to point this out to her, but thinking of how the last time I'd given her a suggestion, she not only didn't accept it, but used my revelation of corruption as leverage over me and ignored me in the aftermath, I began to hesitate: "If I pointed out her issues again, who knows how she might argue back. It would be such a pain to have to deal with her giving me the cold shoulder if I offended her! Forget it, I'll just keep my mouth shut and keep my own affairs in line." Later on, our leader fellowshiped with us about how brothers and sisters from other churches were spreading the gospel and what results they'd achieved. I felt

quite guilty. These were trying times, but brothers and sisters from other churches still persevered in spreading the gospel. Meanwhile, our own church had completely stopped our gospel work and had not achieved any results. I really wanted to write to the leader and tell her about Liu Xiao's behavior and the current state of the gospel work, but whenever I picked up my pen to write, I would think about how awful it was to be condemned and repressed by that antichrist, and then I'd hesitate: "If I report Liu Xiao's problem, will the leader believe me? If she doesn't believe me and investigates my situation, won't that just be more trouble for me? What's more, I'm not familiar with the leader; what if she happens to be an antichrist, can't resolve issues fairly and suppresses me? It's nice how stable and peaceful I feel in my duty now. I don't want to bring myself any trouble by reporting this issue." Realizing this, I once again chose to keep quiet. But it was making me really anxious and agitated to see us continue to get poor results in our work. I was in a dark place and felt agonized; I didn't know how to experience that situation. So, I prayed to God, beseeching Him to guide me and help me understand how to experience that situation.

One day, I came across two passages of God's words that stirred some feeling in my numb heart. Almighty God says: **"Selfish and mean people are perfunctory in their actions and stand aloof from anything that does not concern them personally. They do not consider the interests of God's house, nor do they show consideration for God's will. They take on no burden of performing their duties or testifying for God, and they have no sense of responsibility. ... There are some people who do not take any responsibility regardless of the duty they are performing. They don't promptly report problems they discover to their superiors, either. When they see people being disruptive and disturbing, they turn a blind eye. When they see wicked people committing evil, they don't**

try to stop them. They don't protect the interests of the house of God, or consider what their duty and responsibility is. When they perform their duty, people like this don't do any real work; they are people-pleasers who are greedy for comfort; they speak and act only for their own vanity, face, status, and interests, and are only willing to devote their time and effort to things that benefit them" (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One's Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth).

"If you often have a sense of accusation in your life, if your heart can find no rest, if you are without peace or joy, and are often beset by worry and anxiety about all kinds of things, what does this demonstrate? Merely that you do not practice the truth, do not stand firm in your testimony to God. When you live amid the disposition of Satan, you are liable to often fail to practice the truth, to turn your back on the truth, to be selfish and vile; you only uphold your image, your name and status, and your interests. Always living for yourself brings you great pain. You have so many selfish desires, entanglements, fetters, misgivings, and vexations that you do not have the least peace or joy. To live for the sake of corrupted flesh is to suffer excessively"

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Life Entry Begins With the

Performance of Duty). I felt quite guilty after reading God's words. I realized the reason why I didn't dare report Liu Xiao's problem to the leader was because I was too selfish and despicable. I only considered my own interests, wanting to just do my duty in peace, avoiding offending others and making trouble for myself. As soon as I saw that Liu Xiao had a distorted understanding and didn't accept the truth, I wanted to report her to the leader, but I worried the leader would misunderstand me and think that I was jealous of Liu Xiao and had seized on her faults to attack her. As such, I remained quiet. When I saw that she had stopped spreading the gospel,

watched TV at home all day, showed no interest in her work and just enjoyed the benefits of her status, I should have promptly reported her to the leader, but I chose to protect myself and didn't consider the interests of the church's work at all. Even as I saw how poor our results were in the gospel work, I still remained silent, and no matter how guilty I felt, I just wouldn't report what was really happening. I kept my mouth shut tight. I was truly selfish, despicable and lacking humanity. I felt indebted to God, and I hated myself for not practicing the truth, which had led to long delays in work progress.

While seeking, I came across this passage of God's words: **“For all who perform a duty, no matter how profound or shallow their understanding of the truth is, the simplest way to practice entering into the truth reality is to think of the interests of God's house in everything, and to let go of one's selfish desires, personal intents, motives, pride, and status. Put the interests of God's house first—this is the least one should do. If a person who performs a duty cannot even do this much, then how can they be said to be performing their duty? That is not performing one's duty. You should first think of the interests of God's house, be considerate of God's will, and consider the work of the church. Put these things first and foremost; only after that can you think about the stability of your status or how others regard you. Do you not feel that this becomes a little easier when you divide it into two steps and make some compromises? If you practice like this for a while, you will come to feel that satisfying God is not such a difficult thing. Furthermore, you should be able to fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duty, and set aside your selfish desires, intents, and motives; you should have consideration for God's will, and put the interests of God's house, the work of the**

church, and the duty that you are supposed to perform first. After experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to comport yourself. It is living straightforwardly and honestly, and not being a base, vile person; it is living justly and honorably rather than being despicable, base, and a good-for-nothing. You will feel that this is how a person should act and the image that they should live out. Gradually, your desire to satisfy your own interests will lessen” (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). God’s words pointed me on a path of practice. When faced with a choice between church work and personal interests, we should always give the church’s work priority. The most important thing is to first maintain the church’s work. This is an unshirkable duty that we all must fulfill. I had to practice according to God’s words and stop looking on indifferently. I had to report our problem in the work to the leader right away. If there really was a problem with Liu Xiao’s behavior, the leaders and workers could promptly resolve it and avoid any delays in the work. If I had a mistaken understanding of some issues, I could improve my deficiencies through seeking. How the leaders and workers would view me was less important than these things. Realizing all this, I felt a bit more liberated, and gave my leader a detailed account of Liu Xiao’s situation. But after over two weeks, I still hadn’t seen any response implemented. I thought to myself: “Did the leader take my report on these issues seriously? Why hasn’t she come to resolve these issues? Does she think that there is no issue with Liu Xiao’s behavior and I made an erroneous report?” I felt deeply distressed and wanted to report the issues to another leader, but then I thought: “Well, I’ve already reported the issue to one leader, so I’ve done my duty. I shouldn’t run my mouth; otherwise, if I’m not careful, I may offend someone and be suppressed and punished.” I didn’t want to look into

this matter any further, but I still felt quite guilty. I thought to myself: “I’m reporting these issues to seek the truth and maintain the church’s work, not because I’m trying to make life difficult for anyone. God scrutinizes all things, so what do I have to worry about? Why am I always so overcautious and indecisive about reporting issues, as if my mouth had been sealed shut?” I came before God in seeking and prayer, asking that He guide me to understand my issues, rebel against myself and practice the truth.

Later on, I came across two passages of God’s words which gave me some knowledge of myself. Almighty God says: **“Such people as antichrists always treat God’s righteousness and disposition with notions, doubts, and resistance. They think, ‘It’s just a theory that God is righteous. Is there really such a thing as righteousness in this world? In all the years of my life, I haven’t once found it or seen it. The world is so dark and evil, and evil people and devils are doing quite well, living in contentment. I haven’t seen them get what they deserve. I can’t see where God’s righteousness is in this; I wonder, does God’s righteousness really even exist? Who has seen it? No one has seen it, and no one can attest to it.’ This is what they think to themselves. They do not accept all God’s work, all His words, and all His orchestrations on the foundation of belief that He is righteous, but are always doubting and passing judgment, always full of notions, which they never seek the truth to resolve. This is always how antichrists believe in God. ... In ordinary times, people cannot see it, but when something befalls them, an antichrist’s ugliness is exposed. Like a porcupine, with all its spikes erect, they protect themselves with all their might, wishing not to take on any responsibility. What sort of attitude is this? Is it not one of not believing that God is righteous? They do not believe that God scrutinizes all or that He is righteous; they wish to use their own**

methods to protect themselves. They believe, 'If I don't protect myself, no one will. God can't protect me either. They say He's righteous, but when people get into trouble, does He really treat them fairly? No way—God doesn't do that.' When faced with trouble or persecution, they feel unaided, and think, 'So, where is God? People can't see Him or touch Him. No one can help me; no one can extend justice to me and uphold fairness for me.' They think the only way to protect themselves is with their own methods, that otherwise, they would suffer loss, be bullied and persecuted—and that God's house is no exception to this. An antichrist will already have planned everything for themselves before something has befallen them. In part, what they do is disguise themselves as such a powerful person that no one would dare offend them, or mess with them, or bully them. The other part is their adherence at every turn to Satan's philosophies and its laws of existence. What are those, in the main? 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,' 'Let things drift if they do not affect one personally,' 'Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes,' acting as circumstances permit, being smooth and slick, 'I will not attack unless I am attacked,' 'Harmony is a treasure; forbearance is brilliance,' 'Speak good words in harmony with others' feelings and reason, as being frank annoys others,' 'A wise man submits to circumstances,' and other such satanic philosophies. They don't love the truth, but accept Satan's philosophies as if they were positive things, believing that they'll be able to protect them. They live by these things; they don't speak the truth to anyone, but invariably say pleasing things, ingratiating, flattering things, offending no one, thinking of ways to showcase themselves so that others will esteem them. They care only about their own pursuit of fame, gain, and

status, and do not do anything at all to uphold the work of the church. Whoever does something bad and harms the interests of God's house, they do not expose or report them, but act as if they had not seen it. Looking at their principles for handling things and their treatment of what happens around them, do they have any knowledge of God's righteous disposition? Do they have any faith in it? They have none. 'None' here does not mean that they have no awareness of it, but that they have doubts about God's righteous disposition in their heart. They neither accept nor acknowledge that God is righteous" (The Word, Vol. 4.

Exposing Antichrists. Item Ten: They Despise the Truth, Publicly Flout Principles, and Ignore the Arrangements of God's House (Part One)). **"Some people fear retaliation from antichrists and they don't dare to expose them. Isn't this foolish? You are unable to safeguard the interests of God's house, which inherently shows that you are disloyal to God. You're afraid that an antichrist might find leverage to retaliate against you—what's the problem? Is it possible that you don't trust in God's righteousness? Don't you know that the truth reigns in God's house? Even if an antichrist manages to get hold of some issues of corruption in you and makes a fuss over it, you should not be afraid. In God's house, problems are handled based on the truth principles. Making transgressions doesn't automatically make someone a wicked person. God's house never handles someone because of a momentary revelation of corruption or occasional transgression. God's house deals with those antichrists and wicked people who consistently create disturbances and do evil, and who don't accept even a smidgen of the truth. God's house will never wrong a good person. It treats everyone fairly. Even if false leaders or antichrists wrongly accuse a good person, God's house will vindicate them. The church will never remove or handle a good person who can**

expose antichrists and has a sense of justice. People always fear that antichrists will find leverage to retaliate against them. But aren't you afraid of offending God and incurring His detestation and rejection?"

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). God exposes how antichrists do not believe in God's righteousness and that He scrutinizes all things. They abide by their own philosophy of dealing with the world in all aspects of life, use their own methods to protect themselves and are incredibly crafty and slick. Comparing myself to the revelation of God's words, I saw that I was no different from an antichrist. I had no knowledge of God's righteous disposition, did not believe that the truth reigns in God's house, and lived by satanic philosophies of dealing with the world in all aspects. As a child, my parents would often warn me, "A fool's mouth is his destruction, let your actions do the talking out in the world." After I grew up and started working, I saw the darkness, evil and injustice in society and came to believe that only by learning to be tactful and canny, and ingratiating and not speaking truthfully would I be able to protect myself and live life in peace. Satan's philosophies of dealing with the world like "Silence is gold, and he who talks a lot errs a lot," "When you know something is wrong, it is better to say less" became the principles by which I conducted myself. I lived by these creeds, and not only became reticent and reluctant to speak, but also quite selfish, indifferent, slick and crafty. Even if I had insight on a topic, I wouldn't readily express my view. I wouldn't share my innermost thoughts or speak honestly, and always worried I'd say the wrong thing, offend someone and make trouble for myself. After entering the faith, I still used satanic philosophies to protect myself. I told myself I had to do more and speak less, to avoid offending anyone and making trouble for myself. When I saw that Liu Xiao was not suited to work as a supervisor, I knew I should promptly report this to my

leader, but I worried that my leader wouldn't handle the issue fairly, that I would be suppressed and punished. So, to protect myself, I kept quiet, not daring to say a single honest thing. I was incredibly selfish, slick, crafty and lacking in even the slightest bit of a sense of justice. I was living in a despicable and sordid way. Actually, from my own experience I could see that despite the fact that I was suppressed and replaced after giving a suggestion to a leader, that same leader was exposed as an antichrist and expelled not soon after. Following that, I started fulfilling my duty again, and didn't lose my opportunity to pursue the truth and attain salvation due to being temporarily suppressed by that antichrist. I saw for myself how God's house is ruled by the truth and righteousness. God's house handles all things and treats all people fairly and according to the truth principles, ensuring that nobody is wronged. Yet, I was too evil and crafty by nature and had no knowledge of God's righteousness. I believed God's house was like society, and leaders and workers were like government authorities. I thought if I offended them, there would be no place left for me in the church. These thoughts and views were so evil!

I then came across another two passages of God's words: **"How many philosophies for living are there within you? Have you cast them off? If your heart cannot turn completely toward God, then you are not of God—you have come from Satan, you will ultimately return to Satan, and you do not deserve to be one of God's people"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. It Is Very Important to Establish a Normal Relationship With God). **"I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact"** (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). Pondering over God's words, I realized that what determines if a believer can attain salvation is whether or not they possess the truth and practice the truth. If someone is not able to live by the truth in their faith, and instead abides by satanic philosophies of dealing with the world, then they are of Satan, not of God. Even if, outwardly, they fulfill an important duty, or they are well thought of by a leader, they will ultimately still be cast out by God because they don't practice the truth and have not attained the truth. I plainly saw Liu Xiao disrupting and disturbing church work, but I didn't dare report it to my leader, fearing that I'd be suppressed by an antichrist and lose my duty, which would mean losing my chance at attaining salvation. How foolish and ridiculous my idea was! My ability to attain salvation could not be decided by others; it would be determined based on whether or not I practiced the truth. If I continued to live by satanic philosophies, protecting myself and not maintaining the church's work, then even if I was doing my duty, I still wouldn't attain salvation. Realizing this, I felt quite remorseful and guilty. So, I prayed to God, beseeching Him to guide me in practicing the truth and becoming an honest and upright person.

Through seeking and reflection, I also realized that the reason I was afraid the leader would suppress me if I reported the issue was because I lacked understanding of God's almighty sovereignty, did not accept the situations I faced from God, and instead believed they had occurred because I had been too meddlesome. Were these not the views of a nonbeliever? I saw this passage of God's words: **"Antichrists and wicked people appear in some churches and create disturbances, and in doing so they deceive some people—is this a good thing or a bad thing? Is this God's love, or is it God playing with people and exposing them? You can't understand**

this, can you? God brings all things into His service to perfect and save those He wishes to save, and what those who genuinely seek the truth and practice the truth ultimately gain is the truth. Some who don't seek the truth, however, complain, saying, 'It isn't right for God to work this way. It causes me to suffer so much! I almost fell in with antichrists. If this really is arranged by God, how can He allow people to fall in with antichrists?' What's going on here? You not following antichrists proves that you have God's protection; if you fall in with antichrists, then that is a betrayal of God and God no longer wants you. So, is it a good thing or a bad thing that these antichrists and wicked people cause disturbances in the church? From the outside, it appears to be a bad thing, but when these antichrists and wicked people are exposed, you then grow in discernment, they are cleansed away, and you grow in stature. When you encounter such people again in the future, you will have discernment of them even before they've shown their true colors, and you will reject them. This will allow you to learn lessons and be benefited; you will know how to discern antichrists and will no longer be deceived by Satan. So, tell Me, is it not a good thing to have antichrists disturbing and deceiving people? Only when they have experienced to this stage can people see that God has not acted in line with their notions and imaginings, and that God permits the great red dragon to frenziedly create disturbances and permits antichrists to deceive God's chosen people so that He can use Satan in His service in order to perfect His chosen people, and only then do people understand God's painstaking intentions'' (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Resolving One's Notions Can One Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God (1)).

Through God's words I realized that God allows antichrists to appear in the church so that we may attain the truth and discernment and break free from

Satan's deception and control. If we don't encounter an antichrist, we won't learn to discern them and will still be liable to be deceived by antichrists. Through being suppressed by that antichrist, I gained some discernment of antichrists and also reflected on and gained knowledge of my own antichrist disposition. During that time, I was always seeking status in my duty and was full of desire and ambition. I was walking the path of an antichrist, yet I was completely unaware that I was doing so. Only after being suppressed by that antichrist and replaced did I start to reflect on myself. Through the enlightenment and illumination of God's words I realized that seeking status is a road to ruin. I also learned that in our faith, we must seek to fulfill our duties as created beings—this is what we ought to pursue. I began to focus on pursuing the truth, and would consciously work to do my best in whatever duty I was assigned. This little bit of transformation was God's salvation and great protection. Despite having suffered to a degree, I learned quite a lot in the process and this was most beneficial for my life. The more I reflected, the clearer I became—I knew that what I needed to do was fulfill my duty and responsibilities and report my understanding of the situation to the leaders. As for how the leaders would treat me and what kind of situation I would encounter, all was with God's permission. I should put myself in God's hands and submit to His sovereignty and arrangements. So, I reported the issue to another leader.

After receiving my letter and confirming my report, the leader promptly replaced Liu Xiao. This all left me feeling overwhelmed with emotion. From the time I noticed Liu Xiao was having a problem until when I reported it to the leader, I had delayed more than two months. Thinking of how the gospel work had been affected and delayed those past two months, I felt terribly remorseful and guilty, and I hated myself for how deeply I'd been corrupted by Satan and how selfish and crafty I was. Living

by satanic philosophies of dealing with the world, I had not only harmed myself, but also affected the church's work. Only after reading God's words did I gain some self-knowledge, stop being constrained by status and authority, and honestly report the issue at hand. Thank God!

23. How I Learned to Testify to God

By Moran, China

In June of last year, I was selected as the watering deacon, and put in charge for watering those who had just accepted God's work of the last days. I thought to myself, "I need to do my duty well and repay God's love." At first, I had many difficulties with the work: Some brothers and sisters were busy with jobs and didn't attend gatherings regularly; some were deceived by the slander of the CCP and religious circles and were reluctant to attend gatherings; some were negative and weak due to hindrance by their families and couldn't perform their duties. I felt a lot of pressure when I thought about these things. To water these brothers and sisters well, so that they could understand the truth and put down roots on the true way, a lot of work had to be done! During that time, I prayed to God, relied on God, and sought truth to resolve their problems and difficulties. After a while, most of them attended gatherings normally, and some of them learned the meaning of fulfilling their duties, so they took up duties to the best of their ability. When I saw these results, I was delighted, I couldn't help but appreciate myself, thinking, "I must be good at this work. Why else could I achieve such good results?" After that, when I heard brothers and sisters talk about the problems and difficulties they encountered in their duties, I involuntarily started to show off that I was better and more experienced than them.

Once, at a gathering with some sisters who had just started watering newcomers, they mentioned that some newcomers saw the frantic suppression and arrests from the CCP, and felt negative, weak, timid, and afraid. These sisters didn't know how to fellowship to resolve this. I thought to myself that since I had recently resolved these problems and achieved

some results, this was a good chance to tell them how I fellowshipped on the truth to solve these things, and to show them that it was I who understood the truth and was the capable worker. So, I said confidently, “Recently, I watered a few brothers and sisters who were in the same state. I was very anxious at the time, so to water them well, I held many gatherings with them, and read God’s word and fellowshipped on the truth targeted at their state. I had to ride my bike more than 50 kilometers there and back. After watering them for a time, they gained some knowledge of God’s work, omnipotence, and wisdom, they understood the significance of God using the great red dragon as a foil in His work, and they gained confidence in God. They no longer felt constrained by CCP persecution, and even wanted to spread the gospel to testify to God’s work....” As I fellowshipped, the sisters watched me as if they were entranced. I felt a sense of fulfillment, and felt more energized as I spoke. When I finished my fellowship, a sister said excitedly, “With all your experience, you can see problems clearly. I would be totally confused.” Another sister said enviously, “Solving these problems is so easy for you. If you have any more good experience, please fellowship with us, so we can learn from you.” I was delighted when I heard their compliments. Although I said the results of my work were purely due to God’s guidance, and not my own effort, in my heart, I felt that it was I who had suffered and paid a price for these results. At one gathering, a sister felt negative because she didn’t achieve good results in watering the newcomers, and she talked about many difficulties. I thought, “If I talk about having these same difficulties and deficiencies, won’t others think less of me? I’m responsible for her work, so I’ll tell her about my successful experiences, and show her how I fellowshipped on the truth to resolve problems when I faced these different difficulties. That way, I can both resolve her problems and make others think more highly of me.” Once

I thought of this, I avoided talking about my weaknesses and deficiencies and instead bragged about how effective I was in my duties to them. I said, “During this period, I watered and supported five brothers and sisters. They did not regularly attend gatherings—some because they had many religious notions, some because they lusted for money, and some because they were weak and negative due to problems at home. I went to them one by one, overcame some difficulties, looked for much of God’s word, and fellowshiped with each of them to solve these problems, until they understood the truth, let go of their notions, regularly attended gatherings, and willingly took up duties. There was one brother, a talented professional, who rarely came to gatherings because he pursued worldly status and fame. I had many difficulties in the process of supporting him, but I relied on God, read God’s word to him, and fellowshiped on God’s will. Having listened to me, this brother understood the value of pursuing the truth for believers in God, was able to see that pursuing reputation and status is empty, and he was willing to pursue the truth and fulfill his duties.” After my fellowship, I saw admiring and adoring looks on my sisters’ faces, and they hastened to write down the passages of God’s word in my fellowship. One sister said emotionally, “You used the truth to resolve their problems, so that they could understand God’s will and are willing to follow God and fulfill their duties. You couldn’t do that if you didn’t possess the truth realities.” Another sister said admiringly, “If I faced these problems, I wouldn’t be able to solve them. You have more experience, so you’re better at resolving these issues than us.” It was then that I felt something wasn’t right. Weren’t they worshiping me? After my fellowship, one of the sisters felt a little negative, for she felt her caliber was low, and that she couldn’t use the truth to solve newcomers’ problems. I thought, “Am I talking too much about my successful experience? Am I letting them think that the

problems I encounter are simple to me and easy for me to resolve, and making them think highly of me? Those who admire and those who are admired will receive misfortune—is this kind of fellowship really appropriate?” But then I thought, “I’m telling them about my own practical experience, so it should be fine.” At that point, I didn’t continue to reflect on myself, and the matter passed. Later, I met two watering sisters to ask about their work. As soon as I arrived, one said excitedly, “Thank goodness you’re here. We have some brothers and sisters here with problems we don’t know how to solve. Please talk to us about them.” The expectant look in her eyes made me both excited and worried. Excited because she looked up to me, but worried because I wondered whether always talking about how I achieved results in my work had made her worship me. My next thought was, “I always talk about my successes so as to give them a path of practice in performing their duties, which is fellowshiping on the truth to resolve problems. Besides, I only talk about my real experiences, I don’t exaggerate.” So, I continued as before, fellowshiping on my successful experience. They reacted with admiration and envy, and I was delighted.

After that, at every gathering, I talked about how I suffered and paid a price in my duties, how I fellowshiped on the truth to resolve problems, and each one of my successful examples. Gradually, all my brothers and sisters started to worship me, they waited for me to solve all of their problems, and I very much enjoyed the feeling of being looked up to and worshiped. On the way back from gatherings, I recalled my brothers’ and sisters’ expressions of admiration and worship, and I couldn’t help but feel elated. Being admired and looked up to by so many gave me motivation in my duties. But just as I was immersed in the joy of being worshiped, I faced unexpected pruning and being dealt with.

One day, the church leader came to me and said, “I asked the brothers and sisters to evaluate you in this church election, and everyone says you like to show off.” When I heard this, my face instantly went red with shame. I thought, “How could they all say I love to show off? What must the leader think of me? How will I face anyone again?” I scrambled to explain myself, “I admit I am quite arrogant, and sometimes I involuntarily show off, but I don’t show off deliberately. In gatherings, I only speak of my own experience.” My leader saw I didn’t know myself, and said, “You talk about your own experience, but why do the brothers and sisters look up to you and rely on you instead of relying on God and seeking the truth? You say you don’t deliberately show off, but why don’t you talk about your own corruption, deficiencies, negativity, weakness, or your actual inner thoughts? You only talk about the good, not your own corruption or weakness. It gives the impression that you pursue the truth and know how to experience. Isn’t that just exalting yourself and showing off?” I had no answer to what my leader exposed. During gatherings, I had only talked about my successful experience, and had never opened up about my deviations and failures in my duties. I really was showing off. Thinking of how I had shown off in front of so many brothers and sisters, and how they all now had discernment of me, I felt so ashamed and embarrassed that I wanted to melt into the ground. The more I thought, the more miserable I felt, and I couldn’t stop myself from crying. I went on my knees before God and prayed, “God, I don’t want to show off anymore. Please guide me, so that I can reflect and come to know myself.”

Later, I read a passage of God’s words: **“Exalting and testifying to themselves, flaunting themselves, trying to make people think highly of them and worship them—corrupt mankind is capable of these things. This is how people instinctively react when they are governed by their**

satanic natures, and it is common to all of corrupt mankind. How do people usually exalt and testify to themselves? How do they achieve this aim of making people think highly of them and worship them? They testify to how much work they have done, how much they have suffered, how much they have expended themselves, and what price they have paid. They use these things as the capital by which they exalt themselves, which gives them a higher, firmer, more secure place in people's minds, so that more people esteem, admire, respect, and even venerate, idolize, and follow them. To achieve this aim, people do many things that testify to God on the surface, but essentially exalt and testify to themselves. Is acting that way reasonable? They are beyond the purview of rationality. These people have no shame: They unabashedly testify to what they have done for God and how much they have suffered for Him. They even flaunt their gifts, talents, experience, special skills, their clever techniques for conducting themselves, the means they use to toy with people, and so on. Their method of exalting and testifying to themselves is to flaunt themselves and belittle others. They also dissemble and camouflage themselves, hiding their weaknesses, shortcomings, and deficiencies from people so that they only ever see their brilliance. They do not even dare to tell other people when they feel negative; they lack the courage to open up and fellowship with them, and when they do something wrong, they do their utmost to conceal it and cover it up. Never do they mention the harm they have caused to the work of the church in the course of doing their duty. When they have made some minor contribution or achieved some small success, however, they are quick to show it off. They cannot wait to let the whole world know how capable they are, how high their caliber is, how exceptional they are, and how much better they are than

normal people. Is this not a way of exalting and testifying to themselves? Is exalting and testifying to oneself something someone with conscience and reason does? It is not. So when people do this, what disposition is usually revealed? Arrogance is one of the chief dispositions revealed, followed by deceitfulness, which involves doing everything possible to make other people hold them in high esteem. Their stories are completely watertight; their words clearly contain motivations and schemes, they are showing themselves off, yet they want to hide this fact. The outcome of what they say is that people are made to feel that they are better than others, that no one is their equal, that everyone else is inferior to them. And is this outcome not achieved via underhanded means? What disposition is behind such means? And are there any elements of wickedness? (There are.) **This is a kind of wicked disposition”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Four: They Exalt and Testify About Themselves). What God’s word revealed pierced my heart. Wasn’t my behavior precisely this showing off? In gatherings, I had only talked about my own suffering and the successful results of my duties. When my brothers and sisters encountered problems they didn’t know how to solve, I didn’t fellowship on the truth, help them understand God’s will and know how to rely on God in their duties. Instead, I testified to my own ability to suffer and solve problems. I always talked about how far I traveled and the price I paid to water people. I never talked about the weakness or deficiencies I exposed when I had difficulties. I always spoke of how I bore burdens, how I was considerate of God’s will, how I sought the truth to resolve things when my brothers and sisters had problems, or how many attended gatherings and fulfilled their duties thanks to my watering and support, to make others think I understood the truth and I was good at resolving problems. It was clearly God’s word that allowed those brothers

and sisters to understand the truth, have faith, and want to fulfill their duties. These were the results achieved by God's word. But I didn't exalt God or testify to God's word and work. I let others think that I was the one who solved the problems of my brothers and sisters. Hearing my experience didn't give others knowledge of God; instead, they worshiped me. They didn't rely on God or seek the truth when they had problems. Instead, they sought out my fellowship to resolve things. They viewed me like someone who could even save their lives. If things went on like this, wasn't I bringing them before myself? Even then, I didn't feel like I was exalting myself or showing off. I still thought I was just discussing my own real experience. I saw that I had despicable intentions when I discussed my experiences. I was trying to earn a high position in people's hearts. The more I thought, the more I felt I was despicable and shameless. It was God's grace that I could take charge of watering work, and His will was for me to fellowship on His word to resolve problems, lead people before God, and help them understand the truth and come to know God. But in my duties, I constantly showed off to make people worship me. I saw the effects of the Holy Spirit's work as the effects of my own labor and used them as capital to boast about myself. I stole God's glory and enjoyed the admiration and worship of my brothers and sisters, and didn't feel at all ashamed. I didn't have the slightest conscience and reason! My leader pruned and dealt with me so that I could reflect on the wrong path I took and reverse course in time, which was God's love and salvation for me! I knew I could no longer defy and oppose God. I had to repent at haste. I recalled a passage of God's word: **"Sharing and communicating your experiences means fellowshipping your experience and knowledge of God's words. It is about giving voice to every thought in your heart, to your state, and to the corrupt disposition that is revealed in you. It is**

about letting others discern these things, and then solving the problem by fellowshiping the truth. Only when experiences are fellowshiped in this way does everyone benefit and reap the rewards. Only this is the true church life” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). As I pondered God’s words, I understood fellowship on experience shouldn’t contain personal intentions, ambitions, and desires. I should open my heart and speak what is there to my brothers and sisters. No matter whether positive or negative, I should always open up about my true state, so that they can absorb the positive and learn to discern the negative from my experience, they can see I am also rebellious and corrupt, and can be negative and weak, and they won’t look up to or admire me. That way, my experience can teach them lessons and help them avoid mistaken paths. At the gathering the next day, I found the courage to discuss my state. I dissected and aired out how during this period I had been showing off to make others look up to me, and how I reflected and came to know myself. I felt a great sense of security and joy at that gathering.

Later, I heard that a sister was very depressed. When we talked, she said, “At gatherings I always hear your experience and how you effectively help others, but I lack the truth realities, and my caliber is too low. When problems arise, I can’t solve them. It’s too stressful. I can’t handle this duty.” Hearing what she said, I felt very ashamed. I thought, “I am directly to blame for her negativity. I didn’t exalt God in my duties, I didn’t resolve the practical difficulties of my brothers and sisters in their life entry, and I always boasted and showed off, which made her mistakenly think I understood the truth and had stature. I can’t repeat my mistake. I have to open up and reveal myself to her.” So, I told her my state and how I had been showing off during this period. I let her know that I, too, had

shortcomings, was weak when I encountered difficulties, and also that I didn't actually possess the truth realities, that the results of my duties came from the Holy Spirit's work and guidance, and that I couldn't achieve anything on my own. My sister was moved and said, "Your fellowship made me realize that I don't pursue the truth, I have no place for God in my heart, and I look up to outward gifts, worship others, and haven't understood that all achievements come from the work and guidance of the Holy Spirit. I don't want to be negative and weak in the face of my troubles any longer. I want to rely on God and fulfill my duties." Hearing my sister speak like this, I was very pleased.

After that, I started to reflect on myself. Why, even when I knew showing off was resisting God, did I still involuntarily take this path? What was going on here? Later, I read a passage of God's word: **"Some people particularly idolize Paul. They like to go out and give speeches and do work, they like to attend gatherings and preach, and they like to have people listen to them, worship them, and revolve around them. They like to hold a place in the hearts of others, and they appreciate it when others value the image they present. Let us analyze their nature from these behaviors. What is their nature? If they really behave like this, then it is sufficient in showing that they are arrogant and conceited. They do not worship God at all; they seek higher status and wish to have authority over others, to possess them, and to hold a position in their hearts. This is the classic image of Satan. The aspects of their nature that stand out are arrogance and conceit, an unwillingness to worship God, and a desire to be worshiped by others. Such behaviors can give you a very clear view into their nature"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). From what God's word revealed, I understood I liked to show off to my brothers and sisters and

make them look up to and worship me because I was controlled by my arrogant nature. Because my nature was so arrogant, once my duties produced some results I began to admire myself. In order to show that I was outstanding and superior, I boasted at gatherings and showed off the achievements of my work. Of my difficulties, my weaknesses, my rebelliousness and corruption, I said nothing. When my brothers and sisters praised me, I did not feel fear. Rather, I was very happy, and I shamelessly enjoyed their admiration and worship. Paul greatly enjoyed gatherings and preaching, claiming the effects of the Holy Spirit's work as his own capital, showing off and flaunting himself everywhere to deceive people. He brought all the believers before himself, so that even now, 2,000 years later, the entire religious world worships and exalts him, treats his words as God's word, and lacks knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Paul had an arrogant and self-righteous nature, and had no regard for God; he walked the path of an antichrist who resists God. He occupied God's position in people's hearts, seriously offended God's righteous disposition, and was punished and cursed by God. Wasn't my disposition the same as Paul? I was also arrogant, self-righteous, liked to exalt myself and show off, and surround myself with people. As a result, after months of my "performance," everyone looked up to and worshiped me, and had no place for God in their hearts. When problems occurred, instead of God, I was the one they sought. Wasn't I resisting God and harming my brothers and sisters? Wasn't I walking the path of an antichrist? Only then did I see that I was in danger, and that I was controlled by my arrogant nature. Time and time again, I shamelessly showed off and boasted about myself, I deceived my brothers and sisters into worshiping me, and sometimes I even had despicable intentions and used tricks to show off. I was so despicable! Thinking on this

filled me with disgust and loathing for myself, and I swore to myself that I would never show off again.

After that, I watched a video of a reading of God's word. Almighty God says: **"God is the Creator, and His identity and status are supreme. God possesses authority, wisdom, and power, and He has His own disposition and His possessions and being. Does anyone know how many years God has been working in the midst of humanity and all creation? The specific number of years for which God has been working and managing all of humanity is unknown; no one can give a precise figure, and God doesn't report these matters to humanity. However, if Satan were to do something like this, would it report it? It certainly would. It wants to show itself off to mislead more people and make more people aware of its contributions. Why doesn't God report these matters? There is a humble and hidden aspect to God's essence. What is the opposite of being humble and hidden? It's being arrogant and displaying oneself. ... God demands that people bear testimony to Him, but has He borne testimony to Himself? (No.) On the other hand, Satan is afraid that people won't know about even the smallest thing it does. The antichrists are no different: They boast about every little thing they do in front of everyone. Hearing them, it seems like they are testifying to God—but if you listen closely you'll discover that they're not testifying to God, but showing off, building themselves up. The intention and essence behind what they say is to vie with God for His chosen ones, and for status. God is humble and hidden, and Satan flaunts itself. Is there a difference? Showing off versus humility and hiddenness: which are positive things? (Humility and hiddenness.) Could Satan be described as humble? (No.) Why? Judging by its wicked nature essence, it is a worthless piece of trash; it would be abnormal for**

Satan to not flaunt itself. How could Satan be called ‘humble’? ‘Humility’ is said of God. God’s identity, essence, and disposition are lofty and honorable, but He never shows off. God is humble and hidden, so people do not see what He has done, but as He works in such obscurity, humankind is unceasingly provided for, nourished, and guided—and this is all arranged by God. Is it not hiddenness and humility, that God never declares these things, never mentions them? God is humble precisely because He is able to do these things but never mentions or declares them, and does not argue about them with people. What right have you to speak of humility when you are incapable of such things? You didn’t do any of those things, yet insist on taking credit for them—this is called being shameless. Guiding mankind, God carries out such great work, and He presides over the entire universe. His authority and power are so vast, yet He has never said, ‘My power is extraordinary.’ He remains hidden among all things, presiding over everything, nourishing and providing for humankind, allowing all humankind to continue for generation after generation. Take the air and the sunshine, for example, or all the material things necessary for human existence on earth—they all flow forth without cease. That God provides for man is beyond question. If Satan did something good, would it keep it quiet, and remain an unsung hero? Never. It’s like how there are some antichrists in the church who previously undertook dangerous work, who forsook things and endured suffering, who may have even gone to prison; there are also some who once contributed to one aspect of the work of the house of God. They never forget these things, they think they deserve lifelong credit for them, they think these are their lifetime’s capital—which shows how small people are! People are truly small, and Satan is shameless” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists.

Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part Two)). Having read God's words, I felt ashamed. God is the Creator. He has authority and power. He has the greatest identity and highest status. Yet God personally came incarnate to save corrupt humankind, and He quietly expresses the truth to supply and save people. He never uses the status of God to show off, nor does He speak of how much work He has done to save humankind or how much humiliation and pain He suffers. Instead, He always remains humble and hidden among people, doing His work of watering and saving humanity. God's essence is so holy, so kind and good! I am someone utterly filthy who is deeply corrupted by Satan, in God's eyes I am insignificant, yet I shamelessly exalted myself, showed off, and made others look up to and worship me. I was truly so arrogant that I lost my reason, and I wasn't worthy to live before God! In that moment I felt even greater shame at my arrogance, flaunting, and showing off. I fell down before God and prayed, "God, through Your judgment and revelation, I have seen that I live with no human likeness, and I don't want to live like this anymore. God, guide me, teach me to practice the truth, and testify to You."

I saw God's word: **"When bearing testimony for God, you should mainly talk about how God judges and chastises people, and what trials He uses to refine people and change their dispositions. You should also talk about how much corruption has been revealed in your experience, how much you have suffered, how many things you did to resist God, and how you were eventually conquered by God. Talk about how much real knowledge of God's work you have, and how you should bear witness for God and repay Him for His love. You should put substance into this kind of language, while putting it in a simple manner. Do not talk about empty theories. Speak more down-to-earth; speak from the heart. This is how you should experience things. Do not equip**

yourselves with profound-seeming, empty theories in an effort to show off; doing so makes you appear quite arrogant and senseless. You should speak more about real things from your actual experience, and speak more from the heart; this is most beneficial to others, and most appropriate for them to see” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last

Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). I found paths of practice in God’s words. True fellowship does not mean talking about successful experiences in order to show off. It is to testify to how God judges, cleanses, and saves us. It is necessary to expose one’s own rebelliousness, corruption, and their own despicable intentions and the consequences of their actions, and talk about how, later, through experiencing the judgment and chastisement in God’s word, they come to know themselves. It is in this way that others can gain discernment of the true face of their own corruption and have knowledge of God’s work, God’s disposition, and God’s demands of humanity. It is how they can see God’s salvation for people, and His love for people. Only fellowshiping in this way can one testify to God. Once I understood these paths of practice, I began to practice them consciously. At one gathering, a brother talked about pursuing reputation and status in his duties. He compared himself to everyone, felt miserable about it, and didn’t know how to resolve it. As I heard him describe his state, I thought, “If I resolve his problem, when he talks about his experience in the future, he will say my fellowship is what allowed him to change his state. The brothers and sisters will look up to me and say I understand the truth and have stature. I have to compose the words and ideas in my fellowship and tell him all about my experience.” At that moment, I felt self-reproach as I suddenly realized I was about to give my satanic performance again. The thought I had just held in my mind felt disgusting, as if I had swallowed a dead fly. So I silently prayed to God to

ask for the strength to forsake myself and exalt and testify to God this time. Later, I told my brother my failed experience of being replaced for pursuing and fighting for reputation and status. I spoke too of how, through reading God's word, I was able to reflect, come to know myself, repent, and achieve some change. After my fellowship, my brother recognized that his nature was too arrogant, and that pursuing reputation and status is the path of an antichrist, and he wanted to repent. As I heard my brother's fellowship, I thanked God in my heart. This was God's guidance at work.

After that, in my fellowship with my brothers and sisters at gatherings, although I still showed off sometimes, it wasn't as obvious or serious as before. Sometimes I thought of showing off, but when I sensed it, I prayed to God and was able to forsake myself. Gradually, I showed off less and less, and I experienced fewer states of wanting to boast, and became a bit reasonable in my words and actions. I am deeply grateful for Almighty God's salvation!

24. My Days Preaching on the Frontline

By Ayden, Myanmar

In January of 2021, two of my fellow soldiers shared Almighty God's gospel with me. Then through gatherings and reading God's words, I learned that God has become flesh in the last days to save the corrupt human race, and I also learned about the significance of God's incarnations. I'd never imagined that God would personally become flesh to appear and work among humanity. This is a profound mystery, and it's also God's genuine love and greatest salvation for mankind. I was so moved. I never thought I could hear God's voice and see His appearance and work. I felt that I was incredibly fortunate, and it made me want to attend gatherings even more. By reading God's words and fellowshiping with brothers and sisters, I saw that preaching the gospel is everyone's responsibility and it's what God requires of us. Preaching the gospel is bearing witness to God, bringing people before God, allowing them to gain the truth and God's salvation, while also adding to one's list of good deeds. If I didn't do that, I'd neglect my duty as a created being and I'd be unfit to eat and drink God's words. Once I understood all that, I was really eager to share the gospel. I also wanted to work with God and share the kingdom gospel with even more people. After that, I'd practice sharing the gospel whenever I had free time. Then in October, I was transferred to the brigade that just so happened to have a brother named Nyon, who also believed in Almighty God. I worked with him to share the gospel with my fellow soldiers. Once, I invited about 20 other soldiers to come listen to our sermon, and Brother Nyon and I bore witness to them about Almighty God's work of the last days. Through seeking and investigating, these 20-odd soldiers all ended up

accepting the gospel. I was thrilled and gained more confidence in sharing the gospel.

It was during Myanmar's civil war that I was transferred to the front line. I saw some photos of civilians being beaten and injured, and some of those rescued from the enemy's camps also told us that after being captured they had to cook for the enemy soldiers, and those soldiers also made them fight. They'd shoot and kill the ones who refused. Some civilians' houses were also burned down because of the fighting, and they had to live in hiding in the jungle. And every time the soldiers fought or attacked a settlement, there were wounded taken back and hospitalized. Seeing all that gave me a lot of sympathy for them. I was thinking, they probably didn't believe in God, and without faith they didn't know whose hands people's fates are in, or who they can rely on to gain protection. If I could share the gospel with them and bring them before God, they would be able to pray to God and read His words to understand the truth, gaining God's protection. These thoughts gave me a bit of a burden in my heart. I wanted to go into the settlement to preach the gospel and bring them before God. But I wasn't familiar with the terrain of the frontline, and I didn't know where the enemy soldiers were hiding. Going out to preach the gospel under those circumstances, if I encountered enemy troops, there was the possibility of being captured or killed. I was really afraid. I prayed to God to seek what I should do. Then I thought of God's words: **"You know that all things in the environment that surrounds you are there by My permission, all planned by Me. See clearly and satisfy My heart in the environment I have given to you. Do not fear, the Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He stands behind you and He is your shield"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 26). I realized, I was afraid to go out and preach the gospel and be captured or killed by

enemy forces because I didn't have true understanding of God's almightiness and His rule over all, and I lacked faith. I also learned, all these situations I faced every day, major and minor, were all ruled and arranged by God. Whether or not I'd be captured by the enemy was also in God's hands. No matter how dangerous the situation, if God didn't permit it, they wouldn't be able to get me. And even if one day the enemy really did take me away, whether I lived or died would be entirely up to God. I should submit to the situation God set up. Getting transferred to the front line also contained God's good will. The civilians there were living in such a dangerous environment without anyone to share the gospel with them. They hadn't heard God's voice yet. Maybe there were people there that God wanted to save. I should consider God's will, to preach the gospel and bear witness to God, so that they can be brought before God. At this realization, I didn't feel quite so afraid. I felt ready to lean on God and go preach the gospel in that environment.

Then I began to preach the gospel to the local people, yet I encountered new difficulties. The people there spoke the Dai language. I just knew a little simple, everyday language, like "Have you eaten?" and "Where are you going?" I wasn't capable of sharing the gospel with them. I felt really anxious. I wanted to preach, but I didn't know the language and it felt really difficult. I prayed to God, "God, I want to share the gospel but I don't know the language. Please guide me and open up a path for me." Once in an online gathering, a sister shared a passage of God's words that was really helpful for me. Almighty God says: **"God perfects those who truly love Him, and all those who pursue the truth, in a variety of different environments. He enables people to experience His words through different environments or trials, and to thereby gain an understanding of the truth, true knowledge of Him, and to ultimately**

gain the truth. ... Those who don't walk the bright path of pursuing the truth will forever live under Satan's power, in perpetual sin and darkness, and with no hope. Can you understand the meaning of these words? (I must pursue the truth and perform my duty with all my heart and mind.) When a duty befalls you, and it is entrusted to you, do not think of how to avoid facing difficulties; if something's difficult to handle, don't put it to one side and ignore it. You must face it head-on. You must remember at all times that God is with people, and they need only pray and seek from Him if they have any difficulties, and that with God, nothing is hard. You must have this faith. Since you believe that God is the Ruler of all things, why do you still feel afraid when something befalls you, and that you have nothing to rely on? This proves that you do not rely on God. If you do not take Him as your support and as your God, then He is not your God. In real life, regardless of what situations you encounter, you must come before God often to pray and seek the truth. Even if you understand the truth and gain something with regard to just one matter each day, it will not have been time wasted!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). When I read that passage, it became firmly entrenched in my heart that God is with me. In the face of difficulties, I just have to genuinely pray and lean on God, and He will guide me. Nothing is impossible for God, so I should have faith. Preaching the gospel is my duty. I couldn't retreat just because I didn't know the language. I still had to do my best. Since I'd chosen to spread the gospel to satisfy God, no matter how hard it was, I had to lean on Him and fulfill my duty. Having thought over these things, I felt ready to strive for it, and every time before I went out to preach I'd pray to God, asking Him to guide me. I started trying to communicate with the villagers, playing Dai evangelical and testimonial recordings for them.

While playing them I'd also listen carefully, and when a recording was done, I'd fellowship with the people and add a little with the Dai that I'd already learned. After working that way for two or three days, nine people accepted the gospel. I was incredibly grateful to God, and I had more faith to spread the gospel.

One day, the enemy troops posted a video on WeChat. I saw that after capturing our soldiers they'd tortured them. Some of them had their hands cut off, some had their feet cut off, and they'd cut their throats, like slaughtering a pig. They'd even cut their hearts out with knives. Seeing that, I was really afraid. I was thinking, "I go to the settlement every evening to share the gospel—will I be captured by the enemy? If they did get me, what if they abused me like those other soldiers, or even tortured me to death?" Thinking of this, I was afraid to go out and preach again. I realized at the time that I wasn't in the right state, so I prayed and gave my heart over to God, asking Him to guide me. Later, I read a passage of God's words that gave me some confidence and strength. God's words say: **"God does the work of perfection on people, and they cannot see it, cannot feel it; under such circumstances, your faith is required. People's faith is required when something cannot be seen by the naked eye, and your faith is required when you cannot let go of your own notions. When you do not have clarity about God's work, what is required of you is to have faith and to take a firm stance and stand witness. When Job reached this point, God appeared to him and spoke to him. That is, it is only from within your faith that you will be able to see God, and when you have faith God will perfect you. Without faith, He cannot do this. God will bestow upon you whatever you hope to gain. If you do not have faith, then you cannot be perfected and you will be unable to see God's actions, much less His omnipotence. When you have faith that you will**

see His actions in your practical experience, then God will appear to you, and He will enlighten and guide you from within. Without that faith, God will be unable to do that. If you have lost hope in God, how will you be able to experience His work? Therefore, only when you have faith and you do not harbor doubts toward God, only when you have true faith in Him no matter what He does, will He enlighten and illuminate you through your experiences, and only then will you be able to see His actions. These things are all achieved through faith. Faith comes only through refinement, and in the absence of refinement, faith cannot develop. What does this word, ‘faith,’ refer to? Faith is the genuine belief and the sincere heart that humans should possess when they cannot see or touch something, when God’s work does not align with human notions, when it is beyond human reach. This is the faith that I speak of” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). I learned that when we face trials and tribulations, if we lack faith and we don’t actively cooperate, God has no way to work in us and we can’t possibly be perfected by Him. The more we’re unable to see something, the more we need to have faith in God, and the only way to develop faith is to undergo trials. Sharing the gospel while fighting on the front line, facing the danger of being captured by enemy troops was a trial, a test for me. I was lacking the truth, and I didn’t have a true understanding of God’s almightiness and sovereignty. I didn’t genuinely believe that God rules over all, so I didn’t have faith. Facing a dangerous environment while preaching the gospel, I became afraid of being captured and tortured to death, so I didn’t dare go out and preach. I couldn’t truly give my heart to God. In fact, God was setting up this kind of situation so that He could give me more of the truth, so that I could seek the truth, put it into practice, and recognize God’s almightiness, His rule over

mankind's fate, and the fact that my life and death are in His hands. Now that I was facing that kind of dangerous environment, I had to truly experience it and live through it, and that was the only way I could see God's deeds and develop true faith. Once I understood God's will my heart brightened a lot, and I didn't feel so afraid.

Later, I read another passage of God's words that was even more motivating. Almighty God says: **"God has a plan for every one of His followers. Each one of them has an environment, furnished for man by God, in which to perform their duty, and they have the grace and favor of God that is man's to enjoy. They also have special circumstances, which God lays out for man, and there is much suffering they must undergo—it is nothing like the smooth sailing that man imagines. Beyond this, if you acknowledge that you are a created being, you must prepare yourself to suffer and pay a price for the sake of fulfilling your responsibility to spread the gospel and for the sake of doing your duty properly. The price might be suffering some physical ailment or hardship, or suffering the persecutions of the great red dragon or the misunderstandings of worldly people, as well as the tribulations one undergoes when spreading the gospel: being sold out, being beaten and scolded, being condemned—even being mobbed and put in mortal danger. It is possible, in the course of spreading the gospel, that you will die before God's work is completed, and that you will not live to see the day of God's glory. You must be prepared for this. This is not meant to frighten you; it is a fact. ... How did those disciples of the Lord Jesus die? Among the disciples, there were those who were stoned, dragged behind a horse, crucified upside down, dismembered by five horses—every sort of death befell them. What was the reason for their deaths? Were they lawfully executed for their crimes? No. They were**

condemned, beaten, scolded, and put to death because they spread the Lord's gospel and were rejected by the people of the world—that is how they were martyred. ... Actually, this was how their bodies died and passed away; this was their means of departure from the human world, yet that did not mean their outcome was the same. No matter what the means of their death and departure was nor how it happened, it was not how God defined the final outcomes of those lives, of those created beings. This is something you must see clearly. On the contrary, they used precisely those means to condemn this world and to testify to God's deeds. These created beings used their most precious lives—they used the last moment of their lives to testify to God's deeds, to testify to God's great power, and to declare to Satan and the world that God's deeds are right, that the Lord Jesus is God, that He is the Lord, and God's incarnate flesh. Even down to the final moment of their lives, they never denied the name of the Lord Jesus. Was this not a form of judgment upon this world? They used their lives to proclaim to the world, to confirm to human beings that the Lord Jesus is the Lord, that the Lord Jesus is Christ, that He is God's incarnate flesh, that the work of redemption He did for all humanity allows humanity to live on—this fact is forever unchanging. Those who were martyred for spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus, to what extent did they perform their duty? Was it to the ultimate extent? How was the ultimate extent manifested? (They offered their lives.) That's right, they paid the price with their lives. Family, wealth, and the material things of this life are all external things; the only thing that is related to the self is life. To every living person, life is the thing most worthy of being treasured, the most precious thing and, as it happens, these people were able to offer their most precious possession—life—as confirmation of and testimony to

God's love for mankind. Until the day they died, they did not deny God's name, nor did they deny God's work, and they used their last moments of life to testify to the existence of this fact—is this not the highest form of testimony? This is the best way of doing one's duty; this is what it is to fulfill one's responsibility. When Satan threatened and terrorized them, and, in the end, even when it made them pay the price of their lives, they did not abandon their responsibility. This is what it is to fulfill one's duty to the utmost extent. What do I mean by this? Do I mean to have you use the same method to testify of God and to spread His gospel? You do not necessarily need to do so, but you must understand that this is your responsibility, that if God needs you to, you should accept it as something you are honor-bound to do” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). I realized, all of us being able to follow God is by His rule and arrangement, and He also sets up conditions in which each of us can do our duty. In the course of preaching the gospel, we're bound to face all sorts of situations and dangers. Some are humiliated, some are beaten and yelled at, some are handed over to Satan's authority and brutalized, and some even lose their lives. But no matter what the situation is, I am a created being, and I should fulfill my duty at all times. Preaching the gospel is my life's mission, my responsibility. No matter how bitter or difficult it is, even if I have to pay with my life, I must do my duty and fulfill my responsibility. I thought of the disciples who followed the Lord Jesus in the Age of Grace. They also faced lots of dangers to spread the Lord's gospel. Some were beaten and yelled at, some were imprisoned, and some were crucified, tortured to the point of death while completely alive. But they didn't complain or abandon their responsibility and duty. Ultimately, they obeyed till death, bearing witness to God's deeds and

God's great power with their very lives, humiliating the devil Satan. They didn't die because they did something bad, but it was to testify to God's name, and that the Lord Jesus was the Lord of creation. They paid with their own lives to share God's gospel and bear witness to Him. That's the most meaningful thing. They fulfilled their responsibility. God approves of that kind of created being, and though their flesh died, their souls are in God's hands and under God's arrangement. I also did some self-reflection. When death was involved, I was timid and didn't want to go out to share the gospel. I was still thinking of my own personal safety—what I truly loved was my own life. I thought I could take control over my fate, that as long as I didn't go out and preach, I wouldn't face danger or death. But now I understood, I wouldn't be safe just because I didn't go share the gospel. I was posted to stand guard, which is inherently dangerous, and I could be ambushed. Also, when we went to get water or buy something from the locals, that was dangerous too. We could be attacked by enemy soldiers at any moment. My life wasn't something that I could control on my own. Whether we were captured by the enemy was entirely in God's hands. If He didn't allow it, I wouldn't be captured even if I did go out to preach. If God did allow something to happen, I could still be ambushed or captured by the enemy even if I didn't go preach. I am a created being who should submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements. No matter what happens, I should keep on preaching the gospel and doing my duty. If I find every excuse not to share the gospel and bear witness to God, not doing my duty, I'd still be alive in the flesh, but for God, I'd lose my function as a created being, and my life would be meaningless. In the end God would cast me out, and I wouldn't be saved. On the front line, going to preach in the settlements was dangerous, but for the sake of spreading God's gospel and expanding its reach, I couldn't cling to life, but should properly face the prospect of death,

and if necessary, pay with my life in order to keep on preaching, thus fulfilling my responsibility. That is testimony, and it is the best way to do my duty. I also understood that I am a created being and a follower of God. No matter what dangerous situation I face, spreading the gospel is my life's mission and a duty I must fulfill. I can never stop sharing the gospel, at any time at all. After that, I got two other brothers, Nicholas and Arthur, to go preach with me.

One day, we went to a settlement and ten people came to hear us preach. We fellowshiped with them on how to be protected through the disasters: "Disasters are becoming greater and greater now, just like here, where we are constantly at war, and the water is tainted with blood. There is also the pandemic.... Through all of these disasters, who can actually save us? Only the Savior, the one true God who created the heavens and earth and all things can save us." Then we played some recordings of sermons for them that talked about why humans are born, become old, get sick, and die, how to gain God's protection in the disasters, how Satan corrupts people, and how God works to save mankind. There were also some passages of Almighty God's words: **"These are the facts: Before the earth existed, the archangel was the greatest of heaven's angels. It had jurisdiction over all the angels in heaven; this was the authority God had granted it. With the exception of God, it was the greatest of heaven's angels. Later, after God had created humanity, down on earth the archangel carried out an even greater treachery against God. I say it betrayed God because it wanted to manage humanity and to surpass God's authority. It was the archangel that tempted Eve into sin, and it did so because it wished to establish its kingdom upon earth and to get humans to turn their backs on God and obey the archangel instead. The archangel saw that so many things could obey it—the angels could, as could the people**

upon the earth. The birds and beasts, trees, forests, mountains, rivers, and all things upon the earth were under the care of humans—that is, Adam and Eve—while Adam and Eve obeyed the archangel. The archangel therefore desired to surpass God’s authority and to betray God. After that, it led many angels in rebellion against God, which later became various sorts of unclean spirits. Has not humanity’s development to this day been caused by the archangel’s corruption? Humans are only the way they are today because the archangel betrayed God and corrupted humanity” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and

Work of God. You Should Know How the Whole of Humanity Has Developed to the Present Day).

“First of all, people must understand where the pain of birth, old age, illness and death throughout their lives comes from and why man suffers these things. Did they exist when man was first created? Where did these pains come from? These pains came about after man was tempted by Satan and after man fell following Satan’s corruption. The pain of man’s flesh, the troubles, and emptiness, and all of the wretched things in the world of man—they all appeared after Satan corrupted man. After man was corrupted by Satan, Satan began to torment man, and so man fell ever further, his sickness became ever more profound, his pain ever greater, and he had an increasing sense that the world is empty and miserable, that it is impossible to survive in this world, and that living in this world is increasingly hopeless. So this pain was all brought upon man by Satan and the fall that resulted from Satan’s corruption of man” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The

Significance of God’s Tasting of Worldly Suffering). **“All manner of disasters will befall, one after another; all nations and places will experience calamities: Plague, famine, flood, drought, and earthquakes are everywhere. These disasters are not just happening in one or two**

places, nor will they be over within a day or two; rather, instead they will expand across a greater and greater area, and become more and more severe. During this time, all manner of insect plagues will arise one after another, and the phenomenon of cannibalism will occur everywhere. This is My judgment upon all nations and peoples” (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 65).

They listened to these words and thought they were great. Some people said, “We’ve never heard such words before. They’re wonderful, very moving.” Some said, “Thank you so much for coming and sharing this gospel, allowing us to hear God’s voice.” And others said, “I hope you come again.” Those ten people accepted the gospel that day after listening. I told them that we’d come back that evening, and encouraged them to bring their friends and relatives, too. They brought over a dozen more people that evening. After those people listened to the sermon recordings and to God’s words, they all accepted the gospel and promised they’d come listen when they had time in the evenings. I felt so happy. From then on, we kept preaching during the day whenever we had time, and we would water them at night. After watering we would sneak back to our posts. After nearly a month of that, they were all very stable in their gatherings, and really engaged. They would also bring others to listen to sermons. More and more people accepted the gospel. Seeing this outcome made me really happy, and really moved me. My ability to preach the gospel at the front line and bring those civilians before God was all thanks to God’s guidance and I really felt at peace.

One evening, I went to the settlement to water some new believers. On the way back, I encountered a company commander patrolling with night vision equipment. He spotted me, and, thinking I was an enemy coming to ambush them, gathered several soldiers to capture me. Just as they were

about to fire, I quickly called out. Brother Shawn recognized me, otherwise they would've opened fire. The next day, Brother Shawn said to me, "You were nearly shot last night. It's a good thing I recognized your voice." I was really moved when I heard that, and I said a prayer, thanking God for His protection. I thought of something in God's words: **"Man's heart and spirit are held in the hand of God, everything of his life is beheld in the eyes of God. Regardless of whether or not you believe this, any and all things, whether living or dead, will shift, change, renew, and disappear in accordance with God's thoughts. Such is the way in which God presides over all things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man's Life). I saw that God rules over and controls everything. People's hearts and spirits are in His hands. Whether it's something living or dead, all things shift and change according to God's thoughts. Whether we live or die is also ruled and arranged by God. Whether or not my fellow soldiers fired on me the night before had also been in God's hands. Encountering Brother Shawn was also under God's sovereignty. He just happened to recognize my voice, which is why they didn't shoot. All of this was ordained by God. I was really grateful to God, and so moved. I could sense God's love and protection for me, and I also saw how wondrous His deeds are. After that, those two brothers and I kept going to the settlement to spread the gospel. We had shared the gospel with fifty-seven people, all of whom had joined the church. I was really grateful for God's guidance.

After a while, the gospel preaching had been pretty much completed in that area, and at this, I thought about where to go next. It turned out, that same day our unit was transferred to another settlement that had two villages in it. I was really happy to be able to keep preaching the gospel in a new area. It was also really dangerous in that settlement—enemy troops could come attack at any time. We discovered a landmine right after we

arrived. I felt a little scared, afraid the enemy troops would pretend to be civilians and appear out of nowhere. If there weren't many of us or we went out alone, unarmed, and we encountered them, they'd seize the chance to kill or capture us. But after my experience in the previous location, I'd seen God's wondrous deeds, and I knew that preaching the gospel was my responsibility. No matter what happened, I needed to go along with it. At that thought, I didn't feel so constrained anymore, and I kept on going out to share the gospel whenever I had time. When we went to the settlement, we brought guns, not daring to be careless. We started off sharing the gospel with the deputy village head along with his wife and mother, playing sermon recordings for them. Those recordings talked about how God created the heavens and earth and all things in the beginning, how mankind started becoming depraved, as well as the disasters and wars of the last days and how these are signs of the Lord's coming. The Lord Jesus has already returned to the flesh to save mankind. He is Christ of the last days, Almighty God. He's expressing the truth, doing the judgment work of the last days to purify and save humanity so we can escape evil and escape the disasters. We can gain God's salvation and enter the kingdom of heaven only if we come before Almighty God. They listened to this testimony and all said it was wonderful. The deputy village head said, "Let me grab a notebook to write down what you just said so I can read more later." I said, "Don't worry about it, we'll come back tomorrow. Can you invite some other people to listen too?" He responded, "What you're saying is great, and it's correct. I'm the deputy village head, so I should call the villagers to listen to it together." The next day, he brought some other people to hear our sermon. Ultimately, 94 people from those two villages accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. I was really grateful to God for

arranging for me to go there so I could share the gospel and fulfill my duty, which was God's elevation. I felt so much gratitude to God!

Going through all that gave me personal experience that God rules over people's fates, and that our lives and deaths are in His hands. It also gave me a more practical understanding of God's almightiness and sovereignty. Before, when I hadn't yet arrived at the front line, I knew being a soldier was dangerous, and I prayed and put my life and death in God's hands. But until I really got there, I didn't see how meager my faith in God was. Then every time I encountered a dangerous situation and I got scared and lacked faith, it was God's words that sustained and guided me, giving me faith and strength. That's the only reason I didn't retreat and abandon my duty. I was really grateful to God for letting me have that kind of experience. Wherever I end up in the future, no matter how dangerous the place, spreading God's gospel is my life's mission. I need to have faith in God, give my heart over to Him, and do my duty as a created being. Thank Almighty God!

25. After I Was Reported

By Judy, South Korea

One day in 2016, I suddenly received a letter reporting me. It was written by two sisters I had previously dismissed. They reported that I had acted autocratically and arbitrarily in my duties at their church, promoted two people who ended up being false leaders, and that one of them surnamed Zhang was an evildoer, who disrupted and disturbed the church's work after becoming leader and nearly paralyzed the work of the entire church. The letter also said that if I had listened to their advice at the time, or taken more time to ask around among the brothers and sisters, I wouldn't have chosen those two false leaders or caused such great harm to the church's work. Reading this letter, I was stunned, and a little afraid. I thought, "How could this be? This must be a mistake." I couldn't really accept this fact. I had bad opinions of the two sisters who wrote the letter, and thought they were trying to get revenge on me. They had originally been leaders of that church, but they had poor caliber and didn't do real work. They had shielded and protected false leaders, and they condemned and attacked those who reported them, so eventually they were replaced. I recalled how I had sought their opinions when I had promoted Zhang—all they had said was that she had poor humanity and couldn't cooperate with others. They never specifically said she was an evildoer. But now that Zhang had been revealed, they were reporting me. Weren't they just bitter that I had removed them? Besides, at that time, the CCP's arrests were so severe and the situation was so tough that we couldn't hold proper elections, and for a time no suitable candidate could be found. Zhang had possessed somewhat better caliber and more discernment than the others, so in that situation, who else could I choose? Someone had to be chosen as a

leader. I had also inquired with several brothers and sisters when promoting her, and no one had told me she was an evildoer. Everyone makes mistakes in their duties. Who can grasp someone's essence at first glance? It's normal for unsuitable leaders to be selected. Who can guarantee the right person is always chosen? Weren't they just nitpicking? I kept trying to justify myself in my head. I was very resistant to the report letter. But the two people mentioned in the report had indeed been revealed as false leaders, and Zhang as an evildoer. As leaders, they did serious damage to church work and the life entry of God's chosen people. There was no way to evade the facts when I was faced with them. I reluctantly admitted that I had been unable to see through people, that I was arrogant, self-righteous, and used people blindly. But I didn't truly understand or reflect on my own problems, and eventually the matter passed.

To my surprise, when my leader learned about this, he also exposed me for using an evildoer as a leader, not listening to reminders, and being arrogant and self-righteous. Only then did I have some realization. Had I really made a mistake? Was I really too arrogant and self-righteous? But in that situation, how could I have done otherwise? I didn't understand where I had gone wrong. In seeking, I recalled God's word: **"The more you feel that in certain areas you have done well or done the right thing, and the more you think you can satisfy God's will or are able to boast in certain areas, then the more it is worth knowing yourself in those areas and the deeper it is worth digging into them to see what impurities exist in you, as well as what things in you cannot satisfy God's will. ... This is because what you think is good is what you will determine to be correct, and you will not doubt it, reflect on it, or analyze whether there is anything in it that resists God"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Recognizing One's Own Misguided Views Can One Truly Transform). God's

word awakened me, and gave me a path of practice. I contemplated the matter whenever I had the time, and by seeking, I realized I was indeed too arrogant and self-righteous. Ever since I received the letter, I had been offering my reasoning—the situation back then had been so tough, we couldn't hold normal elections, there were no suitable candidates. Zhang was the best candidate available, and, in that context, it had not been a mistake to select her. No one could have predicted she would later be revealed as an evildoer. I certainly didn't intentionally appoint an evildoer to disrupt the church's work. So I felt I had done no wrong and didn't reflect or try to know myself, and I greatly resisted and disliked the sisters who wrote the letter of report, and even judged in my heart that they were deliberately trying to find fault in me. Thinking about it now, when I had chosen Zhang, these two sisters had indeed pointed out that she had poor humanity. I also knew they worried that choosing an evildoer as leader would damage the church's work, but at that time they couldn't clearly see Zhang's essence, so they didn't dare directly condemn her as an evildoer. But I was too arrogant and self-righteous, and looked down on them. I felt most of the people that they had chosen during their time as leaders were poor—if they couldn't judge people, what use was their advice? When, after so much effort, I finally found someone to take over their work, they wouldn't agree to it. I had thought that they were deliberately nitpicking, so I hadn't listened to them at all. Now, having put myself aside, reflected, and sought the truth, I realized that there were indeed problems in how I chose leaders. Even though a regular election had been out of the question, I should have sought consent from those who understood the truth before selecting a leader. I had merely discussed it with my partnered sister, and asked a few other people how they felt about Zhang. Of these, the two sisters who wrote the letter to report me disagreed with my choice, yet due

to my prejudice against them, I sought no further. I simply relied on my subjective assumptions in thinking that Zhang was a suitable leader. In this matter, I had clearly violated the principles of promoting people to leadership positions in God's house. I hadn't looked further for those in the know so as to gain understanding and clarify Zhang's usual performance, nor did I seek from those who understood the truth. More importantly, when presented with differing opinions, I was arrogant and self-righteous. I had denied and ignored the suggestions of others, and had autocratically appointed Zhang as a leader on my own volition. I truly was acting wildly. God's house has stressed over and over that the greatest taboo in selecting leaders is choosing evildoers and the deceitful. When my two sisters said Zhang had poor humanity, if I really had a God-fearing heart, before selecting her I would have asked more people who were entirely in the know, clarified the condition of Zhang's humanity, and determined whether she was an evildoer. If I still wasn't sure after investigating and there was no one else suitable, I could have used her while observing her, then dismissed her once I discovered she was not a good person and wasn't on the right path. This wouldn't have caused disruption to the church's work. If I'd had a little fear of God in my heart, there's no way I would have simply selected someone as leader, then thought everything would be fine and washed my hands of the matter. I now saw that what I had thought was right, what I had held to be right, was based entirely on my own ideas, it was my notions and imagination. I had been self-righteous and stubbornly held to my own ideas, and the result was that I let an evildoer serve as a leader for over a year, which nearly paralyzed all of the church's work. This was when I finally realized that I hadn't just made a small error in selecting a leader, I had done evil, something that seriously resisted God. For God's chosen people to follow God, pursue the truth and attain salvation, they

must have a good leader, but I didn't treat choosing a leader as a serious matter at all. I didn't have a God-fearing heart. Not only did I fail to choose a good leader for my brothers and sisters, I installed an evildoer and let her harm God's chosen people. I wasn't caring or taking responsibility for the lives of my brothers and sisters at all. With this attitude toward my duty, how could I be fit to be a leader? In choosing a leader, I was so rash, reckless and careless, and so arrogant and self-righteous that when others tried to remind me, I paid them no mind. I was autocratic and arbitrary, and as a result, the church's work and the life entry of my brothers and sisters were seriously damaged. There was no way I could make up for that damage. I had chosen an evil leader for my brothers and sisters and had done so much evil, and when my two sisters reported and exposed me, I didn't feel any guilt or remorse, but instead had remonstrated and defended myself. I was so stubborn and detestable!

After that, I began to reflect on why I was so arrogant and autocratic that I couldn't take advice or seek the truth principles. What kind of disposition was this? How did God see the matter? One day, I came across this passage of God's word: **"Being arrogant and self-righteous is man's most conspicuous satanic disposition, and if people do not accept the truth, they will have no way of cleansing it. People all have arrogant and self-righteous dispositions, and they are always conceited. No matter what they think, or what they say, or how they see things, they always think that their own points of view and their own attitudes are correct, and that what others say is not as good or as right as what they say. They always cling to their own opinions, and no matter who speaks, they will not listen to them. Even if what someone else says is correct, or in line with the truth, they will not accept it; they will only appear to be listening but they will not really adopt the idea, and when**

it comes time to act, they will still do things their own way, always thinking that what they say is right and reasonable. It is possible that what you say is, indeed, right and reasonable, or that what you have done is right and faultless, but what kind of disposition have you revealed? Is it not one of arrogance and self-righteousness? If you do not cast off this arrogant and self-righteous disposition, will it not affect your performance of your duty? Will it not affect your practice of the truth? If you do not resolve your arrogant and self-righteous disposition, will it not cause you serious setbacks in the future? You will definitely experience setbacks, this is inevitable. Tell Me, can God see such behavior of man? God is more than able to see it! God not only scrutinizes the depths of people's hearts, He also observes their every word and deed at all times and places. What will God say when He sees this behavior of yours? God will say: 'You are intransigent! It's understandable that you might cling to your own ideas when you do not know that you are mistaken, but when you clearly know that you are mistaken and you still cling to your ideas, and would die before repenting, you are just a stubborn fool, and you are in trouble. If, no matter who makes a suggestion, you always adopt a negative, resistant attitude toward it, and do not accept even a little bit of the truth, and if your heart is completely resistant, closed, and dismissive, then you are so ridiculous, you are an absurd person! You are too difficult to deal with!' In what way are you difficult to deal with? You are difficult to deal with because what you are displaying is not an erroneous approach, or an erroneous behavior, but an outpouring of your disposition. An outpouring of what disposition? A disposition in which you are sick of the truth, and hate the truth. Once you have been identified as a person who hates the truth, in God's eyes you are in

trouble, and He will detest, reject, and ignore you. From people's perspective, the most they will say is: 'This person's disposition is bad, they are incredibly obstinate, intransigent, and arrogant! This person is hard to get along with and does not love the truth. They have never accepted the truth and they do not put the truth into practice.' At the most, everyone will give you this appraisal, but can this appraisal decide your fate? The appraisal that people give you cannot decide your fate, but there is one thing that you must not forget: God scrutinizes people's hearts, and at the same time God observes their every word and deed. If God defines you in this way, and says that you hate the truth, if He does not merely say that you have a bit of a corrupt disposition, or that you are a little disobedient, is this not a very serious problem? (It is serious.) This means trouble, and this trouble does not lie in the way that people see you, or how they appraise you, it lies in how God views your corrupt disposition of hating the truth. So, how does God view it? Has God merely determined that you hate and do not love the truth, and that is all? Is it that simple? Where does the truth come from? Who does the truth represent? (It represents God.) Ponder on this: If a person hates the truth, then from God's perspective, how will He view them? (As His enemy.) Is this not a serious problem? When a person hates the truth, they hate God! Why do I say that they hate God? Did they curse God? Did they oppose God to His face? Did they judge or condemn Him behind His back? Not necessarily. So why do I say that pouring forth a disposition that hates the truth is to hate God? This is not making a mountain out of a molehill, it is the reality of the situation. It is like the hypocritical Pharisees who nailed the Lord Jesus to the cross because they hated the truth—the consequences that followed were terrible.

What this means is that if a person has a disposition that is sick of the truth and hates the truth, it may pour forth from them anytime and anywhere, and if they live by it, will they not oppose God? When they are confronted with something that involves the truth or making a choice, if they cannot accept the truth, and they live by their corrupt disposition, they will naturally oppose God, and betray Him, because their corrupt disposition is one that hates God and hates the truth” (The

Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Often Living Before God Can One Have a Normal Relationship With Him). God’s word pointed out the essence and crux of the problem, especially these words: **“In what way are you difficult to deal with? You are difficult to deal with because what you are displaying is not an erroneous approach, or an erroneous behavior, but an outpouring of your disposition. An outpouring of what disposition? A disposition in which you are sick of the truth, and hate the truth.”**

This section pierced my heart, and really hit me hard. I didn’t expect that the arrogant disposition I had revealed was, to God, loathing, detesting, and not accepting the truth. This is the disposition of an evildoer and an antichrist! If I were defined by God as someone who loathes and detests the truth, then this would make me a devil, a Satan, and unable to be saved. I felt very afraid. Although I knew I had an arrogant and self-righteous disposition, didn’t take advice from others easily, and committed some transgressions because of this, I merely acknowledged it. Sometimes, I even thought arrogance and self-righteousness were common traits of corrupt humans and not easy to change, so I indulged myself and didn’t treat it as a serious problem I needed to resolve. Because of this, in my duty I often revealed my arrogant and self-righteous disposition, yet was dismissive of it. I just felt upset and remorseful when I was pruned and dealt with, and then would consciously restrain myself, but I still often involuntarily

revealed it again afterward. Those who knew me evaluated me as arrogant and self-righteous, and in the work my leader gave me, he often reminded and instructed me not to be arrogant and self-righteous and to listen more to the opinions of others, lest my arrogance and self-righteousness do harm to the church's work. Now, through what God's word revealed, I saw that I was arrogant and self-righteous and didn't accept the truth, and so no matter how right or beneficial to the church's work others' advice was, I stubbornly clung to my own ideas. If anyone fellowshiped on the truth principles or made suggestions, I disliked and resisted them. I hated and refused to tolerate anyone who exposed me. This showed that I had the antichrist's disposition of hating and detesting the truth. At the very beginning my two sisters had reminded me about a leader I'd chosen who wasn't suitable, out of fear I would let an evildoer harm the church, and yet I hadn't listened to their advice at all and stubbornly insisted on my own views. Now that the two sisters no longer felt constrained by my position, they wrote a letter to expose me and to report my problems. They did this to protect the work of the church, but it also served as a warning to me. Yet not only did I refuse to accept it or reflect or try to know myself, in my heart I detested them, rejected them, and even judged and condemned them as trying to get something they could hold against me. Wasn't this attitude nothing other than loathing and hatred of the truth? I thought of a passage of God's word: **"What kind of people, do you think, are those who are sick of the truth? Are they those who resist and oppose God? They might not openly resist God, but their nature essence is to deny and resist God, which is tantamount to openly telling God, 'I do not like hearing what You say, I do not accept it, and because I do not accept that Your words are the truth, I do not believe in You. I believe in whoever is profitable and beneficial to me.'** Is this the attitude of

unbelievers? If this is your attitude toward the truth, are you not being openly hostile to God? And if you are openly hostile to God, will God save you? He won't. Such is the reason for God's wrath toward all who deny and resist God" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Fulfill One's Duty Well, Understanding the Truth Is Most Crucial). God says our attitude toward the truth is our attitude toward Him, so by hating and detesting the truth, wasn't I detesting God and taking Him as my enemy? That was a through-and-through manifestation of a satanic disposition! Those who hate the truth are evildoers, devils and Satans! If the advice of my brothers and sisters came from the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, accorded with the truth, and benefited the church's work, yet I was so arrogant and self-righteous that I didn't seek, accept, or submit, then I was going against the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and was resisting God. Once I understood this, I grew even more scared, because I knew my problem was very serious. It wasn't, as I had thought, as simple as being somewhat arrogant and self-righteous and not accepting others' advice. The problem involved my attitude toward the work of the Holy Spirit and toward God, as well as my resistance to God.

Later, my leader also dissected me regarding this matter, and said, "When you promoted the evildoer, others reminded you this person had serious problems, yet you didn't listen, and trusted only in your own views. If your views have a basis in God's word, then you can trust in yourself. But if they don't, if they are your own absurd notions, then your trust in yourself is a problem with your humanity. You weren't acting according to principles, and you lack a sense of fairness. You were being irrational and unreasonable." After I heard my leader's fellowship, it really pierced my heart. It was true, not only did I have an arrogant and self-righteous disposition, I also had problems with my humanity, and couldn't treat

people fairly. Once I had chosen someone and planned to use them, I didn't accept others' criticism of them, especially if those who gave suggestions were those I looked down on or who had been dismissed. I turned my nose up and paid no heed to their advice. I figured that those who had been dismissed for not doing their duties well couldn't offer any good advice. In my heart, I had completely rejected those two sisters. I treated and selected people based on my own emotions and ideas. I couldn't treat people fairly according to the truth principles. It shows that my humanity, character and disposition all had problems. The more I reflected, the more serious I felt my problem was. Because of my arrogance and self-righteousness, I didn't listen to my sisters' advice on important work in the church, which caused so much harm to the church. In my course of belief in God, this was one more evil deed, one more stain. I felt really upset and guilty, and began to wonder why I always involuntarily did evil and resisted God? What was the root cause? God's word gave me the answer. God says: **"If, in your heart, you truly understand the truth, then you will know how to practice the truth and obey God, and will naturally embark on the path of pursuing the truth. If the path you walk is the right one, and in line with God's will, then the work of the Holy Spirit will not leave you—in which case there will be less and less chance of you betraying God. Without the truth, it is easy to do evil, and you will do it despite yourself. For example, if you have an arrogant and conceited disposition, then being told not to oppose God makes no difference, you can't help yourself, it is beyond your control. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature. Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account; they would cause you to exalt yourself, constantly put yourself on display; they would make you scorn others,**

they would leave no one in your heart but yourself; they would rob you of God's place in your heart, and ultimately cause you to sit in the place of God and demand that people submit to you, and make you venerate your own thoughts, ideas, and notions as the truth. So much evil is done by people under the dominance of their arrogant and conceited nature!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the

Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). It was true. My nature was so arrogant and so wildly unreasonable. I was always thinking I was in the right, as if my views and opinions were the truth, and I didn't allow others to question me, let alone offer different suggestions. In the matter of choosing a leader, for example, God's house clearly stipulates that wicked and deceitful people cannot be selected. This is forbidden, and a very serious issue. When my two sisters reminded me of Zhang's poor humanity, I just asked a few people about it perfunctorily, and, with my subjective assumptions on top of that, I blindly denied their advice. I didn't seek advice from brothers and sisters who understood the truth, nor did I clarify the difference between someone with poor humanity and someone with an evildoer's essence, nor did I try to find out the specific reason Zhang couldn't cooperate with others—whether the problem was one of a corrupt disposition, or one of a vicious humanity. If it was just a matter of a corrupt disposition and she could accept the truth, then she would change and couldn't be defined as evil. If she was someone of vicious humanity who loathed and detested the truth, she was an evildoer. No matter how she was dealt with for the evil things she did, she would not accept it, nor would she ever sincerely repent. If I had sought the truth at that time, and evaluated Zhang's typical behavior by the essence and characteristics of evildoers, I would have had some discernment of her, wouldn't have insisted on using her, and could have avoided causing such harm to the church's work. The

resulting consequences were entirely due to me being too arrogant and not seeking the truth. If I had even the slightest fear of God and obedience to God, I wouldn't have made such a big mistake or done such evil. But I had been arrogant and self-righteous, and in this serious matter of selecting a leader I had not sought the truth, nor had I listened to the suggestions of my sisters. I had selected an evil person as leader, and put the entire work of the church into a condition of paralysis. So many brothers and sisters had suffered and had their lives harmed, and I had made an irreparable transgression. I was too rigid and stubborn! From my heart, I detested and cursed myself. I prayed to God, wishing to genuinely repent.

I read another passage of God's word and found a path of practice. God says: **"How should you reflect on yourself, and try to know yourself, when you have done something that violates the truth principles and is displeasing to God? When you were about to do that thing, did you pray to Him? Did you ever consider, 'Is doing things in this way in line with the truth? How would this matter be viewed by God if it were brought before Him? Would He be happy or irritated if He knew about it? Would He detest or be disgusted by it?' You did not seek it out, did you? Even if others reminded you, you would still think that the matter was no big deal, and that it did not run against any principles and was not a sin. As a result, you offended God's disposition and provoked Him to anger, even to the point of His despising you. This is produced by people's rebelliousness. Therefore, you should seek the truth in all things. This is what you must follow. If you can earnestly come before God to pray beforehand, and then seek the truth according to God's words, you will not go wrong. You may have some deviations in your practice of the truth, but this is hard to avoid, and you will be able to practice correctly after you gain some experience.**

However, if you know how to act in accordance with the truth, yet don't practice it, the problem is your dislike of the truth. Those who do not love the truth will never seek it, no matter what may happen to them. Only those who love the truth have God-fearing hearts, and when things happen that they don't understand, they are able to seek the truth. If you can't grasp God's will and don't know how to practice, then you should fellowship with some people who understand the truth. If you can't find those who understand the truth, you should find a few people who have a pure understanding to pray to God together with one mind and one heart, seek from God, await God's time, and wait for God to open a way for you. As long as you all yearn for the truth, seek the truth, and fellowship on the truth together, the time may come when one of you comes up with a good solution. If you all find the solution suitable and a good way, then this may have been due to the enlightenment and illumination of the Holy Spirit. If you then continue to fellowship together to come up with a more accurate path of practice, it will certainly be in line with the truth principles. In your practice, if you discover your way of practice is still somewhat unsuitable, then you need to quickly correct it. If you err slightly, God will not condemn you, because your intentions in what you do are right, and you are practicing according to the truth. You are simply a little confused about the principles and have made an error in your practice, which is excusable. But when most people do things, they do them on the basis of how they imagine them to be done. They don't use God's words as a basis to contemplate how to practice according to the truth or how to gain God's approval. Instead, they only think about how to benefit themselves, how to make others look up to them, and how to make others admire them. They do things entirely based on their own

ideas and purely to satisfy themselves, which is troublesome. Such people will never do things in accordance with the truth, and God will always hate them. If you are truly someone with conscience and reason, then no matter what happens, you should be able to come before God to pray and seek, be able to seriously examine the motives and adulteration in your actions, be able to determine what is appropriate to do according to God's words and requirements, and repeatedly weigh and contemplate what actions please God, what actions disgust God, and what actions earn God's approval. You must go over these matters time and again in your mind until you clearly understand them. If you know that you have your own motives for doing something, then you must reflect on what your motives are, whether it is to satisfy yourself or to satisfy God, whether it is beneficial to yourself or to God's chosen people, and what consequences it will cause.... If you seek and contemplate more like this in your prayers, and ask yourself more questions to seek the truth, then the deviations in your actions will become smaller and smaller. Only those who can seek the truth in this way are people who are considerate of God's will and who fear God, because you are seeking in accordance with the requirements of God's words and with an obedient heart, and the conclusions you reach from seeking this way will be in line with the truth principles" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three).

God's word gave me the principles of practice: No matter what I do, I must have a God-fearing heart, and seek the truth and the principles by which to do things. Especially in matters involving the work and interests of the church, I can't act blindly based on my own ideas. Otherwise, once I seriously harm the church or disrupt its work, then I'll have done evil and sinned against God. In addition, I can't decide things alone when

performing my duties, nor can I do things my own way and be autocratic. I must discuss things with my partnered brothers and sisters, seek more and fellowship with brothers and sisters who understand the truth, and listen to opinions different from my own. Regardless of whether someone has status, special gifts or talents, I should humbly listen to their advice. In matters I don't understand, I should seek guidance from my leader right away, clarify the principles involved, and learn how to act in accord with the truth and without offending God before taking action. I must also learn to deny myself. The more I consider something to be right, the less I can cling to it, and I must seek whether it accords with the truth principles. This can resolve the problem of arrogance and self-righteousness, and can protect me from doing evil and offending God's disposition. Previously, I hadn't known myself, I had no self-awareness and was far too sure of myself. Only after this painful failure did I see that when I was sure of myself, when I didn't think I could possibly be wrong, and even when I had a firm basis for thinking I was right, the facts showed that not only was I mistaken, I was terribly, absurdly, and hatefully mistaken, and the consequences were disastrous. In the past, I committed so many transgressions because of my arrogance. At the time, I had really thought I was right, and sometimes had even used God's words as a basis. Later, however, the facts revealed that I had been wrong, because I hadn't truly understood God's word or grasped the principles. Rather, I had used God's word indiscriminately and blindly applied rules. Once I realized this, I admitted from the heart that I lacked the truth realities, couldn't see people or matters clearly, and that some of my views were absurd and ridiculous. On top of that, I had low caliber, I was simple-minded, and didn't think things through or understand the truth. I only knew some doctrines and rigidly followed some rules. At that

moment, I was convinced that I was completely worthless, that I was poor and pathetic, and I no longer wanted to insist on my own views.

After that, when others offer suggestions different from mine, whenever I want to insist on my way, I think back to these painful lessons. I recall how many views I believed were definitely correct were all wrong when measured against the truth, and were condemned by God. I no longer dare insist on my own views, and promptly seek the views and advice of others. Sometimes when discussing things, I unknowingly deny other people's suggestions, but when I realize what I've done, I quickly ask what the majority of people think, lest I not follow the right advice and harm the work of the church. In matters where I think I'm right, I don't dare decide on my own anymore, and I can consciously ask for advice from my partnered brothers and sisters, or seek guidance from my leader. By doing this I feel more at ease, and also avoid doing harm to the work of the church by acting autocratically. Today, although I can still expose an arrogant and self-righteous disposition, it is much better than before.

I am an extremely arrogant and self-righteous person. When I think I am right, I find it difficult to deny myself or to listen to the suggestions of others. Were it not for the judgment and revelation of God's words, for the reports and exposure of my brothers and sisters, and for God exposing me and dealing with me time and again, I would never have been able to know myself and to deny myself. The little change that I've achieved now, the fact that I have some reason and human likeness, is purely due to God's painstaking work, and is the fruit of the enlightenment and guidance of His words. I thank God from the bottom of my heart for saving me.

26. Wanted but Innocent

By Liu Yunying, China

In May 2014, the Chinese Communist Party fabricated the Zhaoyuan Case in Shandong to frame and slander The Church of Almighty God, and then immediately launched a nationwide “Hundred-Day Crackdown” to arrest The Church of Almighty God members. Many brothers and sisters were arrested. In just two months, from September to November, more than 30 brothers and sisters in my county were arrested one after another. At the time, I was responsible for the work of several churches, and every day, under the watchful eyes of the police, I arranged for brothers and sisters in danger to relocate and for books about faith in God to be transferred. I was in danger of being arrested at any moment. One night, a brother who was arrested and released told me that when the police interrogated him, they mentioned my personal information, and even showed him my photo and asked if he knew me. The brother said that I was a primary target of arrest and advised me to leave immediately. I thought, “So many brothers and sisters have been arrested, and there is still a lot of aftermath work that needs to be handled. Besides, some brothers and sisters feel weak due to the great red dragon’s arrests and persecution, and they need support and help. I’ll leave in a few more days.” But my brother urged me insistently, “You’d best leave tonight. Don’t stay here. There are cameras everywhere on the road, and the police will find you as soon as they check the surveillance records.” Once I heard that, terror suddenly took hold of me, and I started to panic. So, I quickly made arrangements for the remaining church work and fled to a neighboring county.

An elderly brother and sister took the risk to receive me. Because there were cameras outside, I couldn’t go out, and so I had to stay in their house.

Their son worked at a school, and the government had issued a circular saying that all teaching staff and their family members could not hold religious beliefs, or else they would be expelled from their positions. Because of this, their son was afraid his future would be affected and opposed his parents' belief in God. The sister was afraid that her son would see me at the house and report me to the police, so she had to arrange for me to live in the attic. Every time my sister's son came back, I was very nervous. Once, her son went upstairs to get something. I was afraid of being found by him, so I hid behind the door and didn't dare move. It just so happened that at that moment, oil smoke from the kitchen was coming up the chimney and I couldn't help but cough. I quickly covered my head and mouth with a quilt, and I could barely breathe. The sister had another son who lived next door, and I could hear the sound of his TV when the volume was up, so to stay hidden, I didn't dare to turn on the lights in the attic, and I usually kept my voice to a minimum. It was winter at the time, and the room was very cold, but I didn't dare to go out in the sun. After a long time, I began to feel very depressed, and I wondered, "When will I be able to stop living like this? When can I reunite with my family and go out with my brothers and sisters to fulfill my duty?" At that time, I often prayed to God, asking Him to guide and enlighten me so that I could understand His will and know how to get through this environment.

Later, I read a passage of God's words: **"Perhaps you all remember these words: 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' You have all heard these words before, yet none of you understood their true meaning. Today, you are profoundly aware of their true significance. These words shall be fulfilled by God during the last days, and they shall be fulfilled in those who have been brutally persecuted by the**

great red dragon in the land where it lies coiled. The great red dragon persecutes God and is the enemy of God, and so, in this land, those who believe in God are thus subjected to humiliation and oppression, and these words are fulfilled in you, this group of people, as a result. Because it is embarked upon in a land that opposes God, all of God's work faces tremendous obstacles, and accomplishing many of His words takes time; thus, people are refined as a result of God's words, which is also part of suffering. It is tremendously difficult for God to carry out His work in the land of the great red dragon—but it is through this difficulty that God does one stage of His work, making manifest His wisdom and His wondrous deeds, and using this opportunity to make this group of people complete” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). From God's word, I understood that when one believes in God in the country ruled by the CCP, persecution is inevitable, but God uses such an environment to perfect people's faith. I thought back to when I wasn't in such an environment, I had thought I was able to endure hardship and had faith in God, but once I was hunted to the point of being homeless, hiding, and completely losing my freedom, and I needed to truly suffer, I harbored complaints in my heart, and all I wanted was to escape. It was only through what the facts revealed that I realized I had no true faith in God at all, no obedience, and that my stature was very small. I also thought about how during these few months, the CCP frantically ransacked homes and arrested people, seized the church's money, and caused many brothers and sisters to flee from their homes, completely upending their lives and leaving them without even a place to live. The CCP did so much evil, arresting and persecuting people. Wasn't its purpose just to turn people away from God and make them betray God? If I became weak, withdrew, or even

complained in such an environment, I would fall for Satan's tricks and lose my testimony. Once I realized this, I felt less pain and torment in my heart. I thought, "No matter how long I have to stay here or how much I have to suffer, I want to submit to God's arrangements."

After a few months, it seemed that the investigations had become less intense, so I went to another city to perform my duty. To be safe, I cut off my long hair, and I wore a hat, mask, and glasses when I went out to gatherings. I took narrow streets and circuitous routes, trying my best not to be noticed. I thought that as long as I was careful, I could still do my duty. I was surprised when one evening, a few months later, my leader rushed to me and said, "The police have posted your information on the internet. They're looking for you. The wanted notice was sent to the mobile phones of residents in the central area of our city and several surrounding districts to tell them to report if they saw you. The police found out that your uncle preached the gospel to you, and they have already arrested your uncle and aunt. For safety, you can't go out to perform your duty anymore." Later, I received news that the police found my 80-year-old grandfather and questioned him about my whereabouts. They had also closed down my uncle's physiotherapy center. What's more, the police were looking for my mother and sister, so they couldn't go home either. When I heard this news, I was very angry. My belief in God was right and proper. Why was the Communist Party oppressing people who believe in God so viciously? Why was there no fairness and freedom of belief in China? I had originally planned to covertly go back and see my family, but I hadn't expected that I had been listed as wanted, or that they would threaten and intimidate my family. Even though I had a home, I couldn't go back, and my family had been implicated and arrested. I realized that now I was a wanted criminal, and I wondered what my friends and family would say about me. Would

they think I had done something bad? How could I face them in the future? As I thought about this, I couldn't stop my tears from falling. The more I thought about it, the more miserable I felt. I felt it was too difficult to believe in God in China. In my pain, I prayed to God, "God! I don't know how to get through this. Please give me faith and strength, and guide me in understanding Your will." After I had prayed, I thought of the hymn of God's word **"The Most Meaningful Life,"** which says: **"You are a created being—you should of course worship God and pursue a life of meaning. Since you are a human being, you should expend yourself for God and endure all suffering! You should gladly and assuredly accept the little suffering you are subjected to today and live a meaningful life, like Job and Peter. You are people who pursue the right path, those who seek improvement. You are people who rise up in the nation of the great red dragon, those whom God calls righteous. Is that not the most meaningful life?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Practice (2)). Listening to it, I was moved to tears. It is right and proper for created beings to believe and worship God, and God approves of this. I thought of Job, who feared God and shunned evil. Even though he lost his children, property, suffered boils all over his body, and was judged and misunderstood by his wife and friends, he still kept his faith in God, praised God in his suffering, stood firm in his testimony to God, and humiliated Satan. There was also Peter, who sought to know and love God all his life. He experienced hundreds of trials and refinements, endured great pain, and finally was crucified upside down for God, thereby creating beautiful and resounding testimony. As a created being, it is so meaningful to be able to stand firm in testimony for God and to gain the Creator's approval! At the time, I was wanted and pursued by the Communist Party because of my belief in God. Even if my relatives and friends misunderstood me and

forsook me, this was nothing to be ashamed of, because I was following the right path in life and doing the most righteous thing. As I considered this, I felt less pain, and instead felt proud of myself for being able to suffer this way.

One day in January 2016, a sister handed me a deck of playing cards. I took it and saw that it had my photo and identity information printed on it. My name, ID number, and household registration address were all there, and it was written that I was listed as a fugitive online by the Public Security Bureau as a “criminal suspected of organizing and using a cult organization to undermine the implementation of the law.” There was also a reporting hotline number printed on the playing card, and the statement that informants could be rewarded. The sister said the police were distributing sets of playing cards containing the photos and information about myself and three other sisters in charge of church work alongside those of murderers and robbers. Later, I heard from my brothers and sisters that they saw a wanted notice for me on the big screens outside the train station and on the bulletin board at the entrance of the Public Security Bureau. Hearing all this simply felt astonishing to me. I wanted to ask them, “What law did I break? What did I do that violated the law? Why are you using such unscrupulous means to hunt me down and capture me?” I couldn’t help but recall a passage of God’s word: **“For thousands of years this has been the land of filth. It is unbearably dirty, misery abounds, ghosts run rampant everywhere, tricking and deceiving, making groundless accusations, being ruthless and vicious, trampling this ghost town and leaving it littered with dead bodies; the stench of decay covers the land and pervades the air, and it is heavily guarded. Who can see the world beyond the skies? The devil tightly trusses all of man’s body, it veils both his eyes, and seals his lips firmly shut. The king of devils has**

rampaged for several thousand years, right up until today, when it still keeps a close watch on the ghost town, as if it were an impenetrable palace of demons; this pack of watchdogs, meanwhile, stare with glaring eyes, deeply fearful that God will catch them unawares and wipe them all out, leaving them without a place of peace and happiness. How could the people of a ghost town such as this ever have seen God? Have they ever enjoyed the dearness and loveliness of God? What appreciation have they of the matters of the human world? Who of them can understand God's eager will? Small wonder, then, that God incarnate remains completely hidden: In a dark society such as this, where the demons are merciless and inhumane, how could the king of devils, who kills people without batting an eye, tolerate the existence of a God who is lovely, kind, and also holy? How could it applaud and cheer the arrival of God? These lackeys! They repay kindness with hate, they began treating God as an enemy long ago, they abuse God, they are savage in the extreme, they have not the slightest regard for God, they plunder and pillage, they have lost all conscience, they go against all conscience, and they tempt the innocent into senselessness. Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin!" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). God's words revealed the true nature of the great red dragon. The CCP is an enemy of God, a devil that resists and hates God, and the place it rules is the lair of Satan the devil. It simply refuses to allow God to exist, and much less does it allow people to believe in the true God and follow the right path. This is why it defines Christianity as a "cult" and the Bible as "cult literature," and arrests

Christians so wantonly. To banish God's work of the last days, it fabricates all kinds of rumors and creates false criminal cases to frame and discredit The Church of Almighty God, it pursues and orders the arrests of believers in God as if they were the most heinous of criminals, and it deceives and incites those who don't know the facts into hating the faithful and resisting God alongside it. The Communist Party really tells every possible lie and does every imaginable evil thing! Once I recognized this, it strengthened my determination to forsake the great red dragon and follow God to the end! Later, I heard from my leader that two sisters who were listed as wanted with me on the playing cards had been arrested and sentenced to four years in prison.

Four months later, the police offered an additional 10,000 yuan for my arrest. A sister in my hometown sent me a letter and told me that the village Party secretary was spreading rumors that because I believed in God, I no longer wanted to see my family or relatives, and that I was acting against the government. As time went on, the rumors became more and more outrageous, and some started to say that I had gone insane or that I was selling drugs. When the people in nearby villages heard these rumors, they all slandered and condemned me. My younger brother found these rumors so unbearable and was so worried for me that he sobbed and wanted to come find me. When I heard this news, I couldn't calm myself or stop my tears from flowing. I really wanted to stand before my relatives and friends and explain that I believed in the true God, followed the right path, and had done nothing illegal. I wanted to fly straight to my brother, comfort him, and let him know not to worry about me. But if I went back like this, I would definitely be arrested by the police, and I would also put the brothers and sisters I had contact with in danger. I anxiously paced around the room.

The more I thought about these things, the more I couldn't sit still. Finally, I decided to take the risk and call my brother.

I knew my brother's cell phone was probably being monitored by the police, but all I wanted to do was speak to him, so I didn't concern myself with such details. I disguised myself and biked to a place dozens of miles away to call him, but to my surprise, the call didn't go through. I wasn't ready to give up, so I tried again, but the result was the same. I suddenly had a vague awareness that this was probably God's intervention. If my brother's cell phone was being monitored, then he and I would both be in danger. With this in mind, I prayed to God, "God! I almost fell for one of Satan's tricks today. If You hadn't stopped me in time, I would probably have been in danger. God, You know my weaknesses. Please lead me and guide me, and give me faith and strength...." When I returned to my host's home for spiritual devotionals, I read a passage of God's words: **"Those whom God refers to as 'overcomers' are those who are still able to stand witness and maintain their confidence and devotion to God when under the influence of Satan and while being laid siege to by Satan, that is, when they find themselves amidst the forces of darkness. If you are still able to keep a pure heart before God and maintain your genuine love for God no matter what, then you are standing witness in front of God, and this is what God refers to as being an 'overcomer'"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Maintain Your Devotion to God). From God's word, I understood that God makes a group of overcomers in the last days. No matter how much pain or refinement they endure, or how the forces of Satan disturb and attack them, they are able to maintain their faith in God and follow God to the end. Then I thought about how when I was slandered and defamed, I became negative and weak because I feared that my reputation would be ruined. I also feared that my younger brother

wouldn't understand, so to give him peace of mind, I disregarded the safety of my brothers and sisters. I saw that I had no faith or loyalty to God. Wasn't I losing my testimony by doing this? The great red dragon was hunting for me as if I was a criminal, inciting everyone to attack and slander me, and causing my relatives to misunderstand me. It was doing these things precisely because it wanted to make me negative and weak and force me to betray God. I couldn't let the great red dragon's devious tricks succeed. Once I realized this, I made up my mind: I would stand in testimony under Satan's siege to satisfy God, and I would humiliate the great red dragon!

Illness was also a problem that plagued me during my days on the run. I had a left lung resection when I was 15 years old, and my right lung was not very good, either. At that time, the doctor told me to breathe more fresh air and exercise properly to increase my lung capacity. But because I was wanted by the police, I was forced to hide indoors for a long time. I couldn't go out to get fresh air. I didn't even have the chance to stand on a balcony to exercise. I had to be very careful when I occasionally opened the window to get some fresh air, because if I was discovered by the neighbors, it wouldn't just be me in danger, I would be putting the brothers and sisters who hosted me at risk. After staying in this kind of environment for a long time, my physical condition started to deteriorate. The air couldn't circulate indoors, so my breathing became increasingly strained, my chest felt congested, and after a while, my lung started to hurt, and I often coughed. When I knelt and prayed, I felt like fluid was about to come out of my mouth. When I slept on my side, I could feel the fluid moving in my lung. Later, when it got even worse, I started coughing up blood. My brothers and sisters advised me to go to the hospital, but to go to the hospital and see a doctor, I had to register with my ID card. I was a fugitive, so if something

happened, not only would I be arrested, the brothers and sisters who had taken care of me would also be implicated, so I didn't dare go to the hospital. Some brothers and sisters brought me traditional Chinese medicines, but my condition didn't improve after taking them. I still coughed up blood. I couldn't eat, and my body became increasingly weaker. I felt a little afraid, because if I continued to let my condition go untreated and it got worse, wouldn't I eventually stop breathing and suffocate? Wouldn't that mean my hope for salvation and a beautiful destination was gone? Wouldn't those years of forsaking, expending, and hard work I had done in my belief in God all have been in vain? I really didn't want to die. When I saw that my condition was getting worse by the day and I was coughing up blood, I couldn't help crying, and I felt utterly miserable.

Later, I searched for parts of God's word that applied to my state and I came across this passage: **"Job did not talk of trades with God, and made no requests or demands of God. His praising of God's name was because of the great power and authority of God in ruling all things, and it was not dependent on whether he gained blessings or was struck by disaster. He believed that regardless of whether God blesses people or brings disaster upon them, God's power and authority will not change, and thus, regardless of a person's circumstances, God's name should be praised. That man is blessed by God is because of God's sovereignty, and when disaster befalls man, so, too, it is because of God's sovereignty. God's power and authority rule over and arrange everything about man; the vagaries of man's fortune are the manifestation of God's power and authority, and regardless of one's viewpoint, God's name should be praised. This is what Job experienced and came to know during the years of his life. All of Job's thoughts and actions reached the ears of God and arrived before God, and were seen**

as important by God. God cherished this knowledge of Job, and treasured Job for having such a heart. This heart awaited God's command always, and in all places, and no matter what the time or place it welcomed whatever befell him. Job made no demands of God. What he demanded of himself was to wait for, accept, face, and obey all of the arrangements that came from God; Job believed this to be his duty, and it was precisely what was wanted by God" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself II). After reading God's words, I understood a little about God's will. The fact that my illness was getting worse was permitted by God. It was God's test for me to see if I had true faith and obedience. But when I was in pain, all I thought about was my own life, death, and final destination. I was afraid that I would lose my salvation if I died. I saw that I believed in God purely to gain blessings, that I was attempting to make deals with God, that I lacked the conscience and reason a created being should possess, and that I didn't have any obedience to God at all. I thought of Job. No matter whether God gave him great wealth or allowed Satan to deprive him of everything, he praised the name of God, and believed that no matter whether God gives or takes, God is righteous. Job's belief in God was not adulterated by personal motives, he didn't consider his own interests, gains, losses, and no matter what God did, he could stand in the position of a created being and simply obey God. He viewed obedience to God as more important than his own life. Job's humanity, conscience, and reason made me feel especially ashamed. In all of my belief in God up to this point, I had been trying to make deals with God, and I was still very rebellious and corrupt. Even if I really were to die of my illness, that would be by God's righteousness. When I recognized this, I knew how I should face illness and death, so I thought to myself, "No

matter how my illness develops, I will entrust myself into God's hands and submit to God's arrangements."

One morning in November of 2016, just when I wanted to get up, my lung began to hurt. It took me about ten minutes and all of my strength to get up and lean on the headboard. At that moment, the freezing cold wind came in through the window, and I felt truly hopeless. I couldn't stop myself from crying. After a while, I became short of breath, my heartbeat sped up, my whole body became tense, I struggled to exhale and inhale, and my whole body was very uncomfortable. I felt like I could suffocate at any moment, and I thought that this time, I might not survive. When my sisters saw me this way, they were so anxious that they didn't know what to do, so they called a sister who had a clinic to come over. She scrambled to give me an IV infusion, but even after she put the needle in, the infusion wouldn't go in because my blood flow had pretty much stopped. Hopeless, she walked to the door of the room, shook her head, and said, "There's nothing we can do." Some sisters turned away and quietly wiped away tears. I knew that I was about to die, and I was a little scared. I was afraid that if I died, I wouldn't see the realization of the kingdom. At this time, Job's words kept coming into my mind: "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah" (Job 1:21). I also thought of the passage of God's word I had read earlier: **"When you face suffering, you must be able to lay aside concern for the flesh and to not make complaints against God. When God hides Himself from you, you must be able to have the faith to follow Him, to maintain your previous love without allowing it to falter or dissipate. No matter what God does, you must submit to His design and be prepared to curse your own flesh rather than make complaints against Him. When you are faced with trials, you must satisfy God, though you may weep bitterly or feel reluctant to part with**

some beloved object. Only this is true love and faith” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). God’s words greatly inspired me. I was afraid of death before, so I didn’t obey God at all, but this time I could no longer rebel against God. Even if I did die, I had no complaints. I am a created being, so I should obey God. What’s more, I was fortunate to have accepted God’s gospel of the last days and heard truths that the saints of all past eras never heard. This was already God’s grace and favor to me. Even if I was facing death, I still had to thank God! So, I struggled to say two words—paper, pen. The sisters quickly brought them, and I leaned on the sisters and used all my strength to write in the notebook: “God is forever righteous! He is forever worthy of our praise!” The moment I stopped writing and let go of the pen, my vision gradually dimmed.

The sisters cried and held my hand, encouraging me to rely on God and persevere, but faced with the facts before me, I felt I really couldn’t hold on anymore, that it was impossible to live. I felt as if my heart was gradually sinking to the bottom of the ocean, and the sounds around me faded away. But just when I felt that there was no hope, a passage of God’s words appeared very clearly in my mind: **“People’s faith is required when something cannot be seen by the naked eye, and your faith is required when you cannot let go of your own notions. When you do not have clarity about God’s work, what is required of you is to have faith and to take a firm stance and stand witness. When Job reached this point, God appeared to him and spoke to him. That is, it is only from within your faith that you will be able to see God, and when you have faith God will perfect you. Without faith, He cannot do this”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). The enlightenment of God’s word gave me great comfort and

encouragement. My life comes from God, and whether I lived or died on that day was in the hands of God. Without God's permission, neither Satan's forces of evil nor disease could take my life. As long as I had a single breath left in me, I couldn't give up, and I shouldn't lose hope in God. I prayed to God, "God! Although I face death today, I have deeply felt that You are always by my side. God, I wish to entrust myself completely to You, and I leave my life and death entirely up to You! I believe that no matter what You do, You are righteous. I have come before You in this life and gained some knowledge of You, so even if I die, I will have no complaints or regrets. If I don't die today, if I can continue to live, from this day forth, I wish to pursue the truth, perform my duty well, and repay Your great love." At that time, a sister played the hymn **"Pure Love Without Blemish"**: **"'Love' refers to an affection that is pure and without blemish, where you use your heart to love, to feel, and to be thoughtful. In love there are no conditions, no barriers, and no distance. In love there is no suspicion, no deceit, and no cunning. In love there is no trade and nothing impure. If you love, then you will gladly dedicate yourself, will gladly suffer hardship, you will be compatible with Me..."**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Many Are Called, but Few Are Chosen).

After hearing these lyrics, I felt a great sense of self-reproachment. After believing in God for so long, I had not put into practice any of God's word, let alone did I truly love God. At that time, whether I lived or died, I only wanted to pursue obedience to God. As I was contemplating God's words, a miracle happened. Without me even noticing it, my breathing gradually eased, my breaths became less rapid, and my heart became much calmer. When the sisters saw that I had recovered, they thanked God with excitement, and I truly saw God's miraculous deeds. Although I could breathe normally again, my body was already severely depleted, so my

sisters still advised me to be hospitalized. One of them gave me her ID card, but I was afraid to implicate her. She held my hand and said, “Let’s pray to God together. What matters now is getting to the hospital. Just pray to God for perseverance and it will be fine.” I was so moved that I didn’t know what to say, nor did I have the strength to say it, so I could only nod my head, knowing all of this was by God’s love. After arriving at the hospital, although the doctor had some doubts about my ID card, they did not look into my real identity in detail, and the treatment process went relatively smoothly. My condition gradually improved, and I was discharged from the hospital about a week later.

After I was discharged from the hospital, I resumed my life in hiding. Because the brothers and sisters around me were often arrested, I frequently had to move urgently to a new place, which became a terrible chore for me. I had to wear a mask when I moved houses to avoid being caught on camera, but it made it hard for me to breathe. Once, when I was hurrying along the road wearing a mask, I couldn’t breathe. It was very difficult to get on the bus, and once I did, there were many people inside, and the air was so stuffy that I was taking deep, gulping breaths. My chest tightened painfully, and my eyes were widening involuntarily. I felt that if I didn’t get off the bus, I might die inside it. I constantly prayed and called out to God in my heart, and after quite a while I was able to breathe a little easier. After relocating so many times, I felt weak, and I was afraid that my body wouldn’t be able to handle it, and that if it went on, this torment would kill me. Later, I saw a passage of God’s words: **“The utmost faith and love are required from us in this stage of work. We may stumble from the slightest carelessness, for this stage of work is different from all the previous ones: What God is perfecting is mankind’s faith, which is both invisible and intangible. What God does is convert words to faith, to**

love, and to life. People must reach a point where they have endured hundreds of refinements and possess faith greater than Job's. They must endure incredible suffering and all manner of torture without ever leaving God. When they are obedient unto death, and have great faith in God, then this stage of God's work is complete" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (8)). It's true, the path of following God is inherently bumpy and difficult. The Communist Party's persecution of Christians has never let up. If we believe in God, we face the danger of being arrested, tortured, or even killed at any moment, but God uses such environments to perfect our faith. I knew that as someone who believes in and follows God, I should endure these persecutions and tribulations. When I thought of this, my faith felt renewed.

Looking back on my years of belief in God, I see that the Chinese Communist Party used various means to push me, step by step, into a dead end, but God's words have always led and enlightened me. Now, I have some discernment of the demonic essence of the CCP, and I have gained some understanding of the adulteration of my seeking blessings in my faith, and I have learned how to be reasonable before God. I have also seen God's miraculous deeds. When I was on the verge of death, God guided me toward tenaciously surviving, and my faith in God grew stronger. All of these are gains I could never have made in a comfortable environment. I resolve that no matter how the CCP persecutes me, or how hard or difficult things become, I will follow God, properly perform my duty, and repay God's love.

27. The Fruit of Sharing the Gospel

By Patricia, South Korea

In September 2017, I met a Filipina Christian online, named Teresa. She said she wasn't getting anything from church services, and she saw more and more other believers following secular trends. Her church was feeling desolate to her, and she wanted to find one with the work of the Holy Spirit. She also said she wanted to read more of God's words, know Him, and live a new life. Seeing her spiritual longing, I wanted to share the gospel with her so she could hear God's voice and accept God's work of the last days. One time I asked her what she wanted from her faith. She said, "I want to go to God's kingdom and be with Him forever, but I'm a sinner, and I'm not worthy of His kingdom." I told her that we have to understand the standards for God's kingdom if we want to get in, and asked if she wanted to learn about this aspect of the truth. She said really excitedly, "Absolutely!" I saw she was a true believer who wanted to look into it, so I was eager to share testimony on God's work of the last days. But it was time for her to go to work, so we had to wrap up our chat for the day.

Later, she got really busy with her job, working from early morning to late at night, and after work she was exhausted and needed to rest. On top of that, she had to spend what little time she had off each week going to church services, so there wasn't much of a chance for us to chat. She was at work pretty much every time I contacted her, so we really didn't have time to talk. I started feeling discouraged after a while. I was thinking that we had to communicate online since we weren't in the same country, so if she didn't have time to log on, how could I share God's work of the last days with her? I started to think that my hands were tied, so I should forget about it. Maybe someone else would share the gospel with her. Just as I was about

to give up, I remembered something God said: “Are you aware of the burden on your shoulders, your commission, and your responsibility? Where is your sense of historic mission? How will you adequately serve as a master in the next age? Do you have a strong sense of masterhood? How would you explain the master of all things? Is it really the master of all living creatures and of all physical things in the world? What plans do you have for the progress of the next phase of the work? How many people are waiting for you to be their shepherd? Is your task a heavy one? They are poor, pitiable, blind, and at a loss, wailing in the darkness—where is the way? How they yearn for the light, like a shooting star, to suddenly descend and dispel the forces of darkness that have oppressed man for so many years. Who can know the full extent to which they anxiously hope, and how they pine, day and night, for this? Even on a day when the light flashes past, these deeply suffering people remain imprisoned in a dark dungeon without hope of release; when will they weep no longer? Terrible is the misfortune of these fragile spirits who have never been granted rest, and long have they been kept bound in this state by merciless bonds and frozen history. And who has heard the sound of their wailing? Who has looked upon their miserable state? Has it ever occurred to you how grieved and anxious God’s heart is? How can He bear to see innocent mankind, whom He created with His own hands, suffering such torment? Human beings, after all, are the victims who have been poisoned. And although man has survived to this day, who would have known that mankind has long been poisoned by the evil one? Have you forgotten that you are one of the victims? Are you not willing to strive, out of your love for God, to save these survivors? Are you not willing to devote all of your energy to repaying God, who loves mankind like His own flesh and

blood?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How Should You Attend to Your Future Mission?). Giving some thought to God’s words, I felt really bad. I hadn’t done everything possible to share the gospel with her, and I hadn’t even told her that the Lord Jesus has already returned. She had heartfelt faith in the Lord and longed to understand His will, but she was in spiritual darkness, without sustenance. If I gave up on her just when she really needed help, when would she hear God’s voice? Now that disasters are growing, if I didn’t bear witness to God’s work of the last days right away, she could miss out on salvation. I felt even worse at that thought, and prayed to God, “God, I know all is possible with You. I want to do everything in my power to share the gospel with Sister Teresa. Please guide me.” After praying, it suddenly occurred to me that she was short on time, but I could set up a time in advance for us to pray together. So I asked her about it and she agreed right away. We set up a time for 5-something in the morning every day. I was really busy with my duty at the time, and I was working late every night. I was thinking I’d hardly get any sleep if I had to get up that early. But I told myself that if I worried about my physical comfort, it would delay Teresa coming before God. I felt guilty about that. I remembered that God said **“The flesh belongs to Satan. Within it are extravagant desires, it thinks only for itself, it wants to enjoy comfort and revel in leisure, wallowing in sloth and idleness, and having satisfied it to a certain point you will ultimately be eaten up by it”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). I knew that satisfying the flesh meant satisfying Satan. I’d fail to give testimony and to do my duty, and lose my chance to bear witness to God’s work of the last days. I said a prayer, ready to turn my back on the flesh. Even if I had to pay more of a price, I needed to share the gospel with her. We started meeting for early morning prayer, and when I said a really

sincere prayer for her, hoping she would have more time for us to fellowship on God's words, she said to me very seriously, "I can feel how genuine you are. Thank you for your prayer. I'm really moved." Hearing her say this was heartwarming, and I saw that people can really feel it when someone is being genuine. I silently resolved to God that I would be sure to share testimony of God's work of the last days with her. So I suggested to her that we make some time to fellowship together. She agreed, and managed to squeeze in a daily 30-minute fellowship, and mentioned again that she wanted to know how to get into God's kingdom.

We talked about that in our fellowship the very next day. I said, "Every believer wants to enter the kingdom of heaven, so what do we need to do? We have to listen to the Lord. The Lord Jesus said: '**Not every one that said to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of My Father which is in heaven**' (Matthew 7:21). The Lord was very clear. The key to getting into the kingdom of heaven is to do God's will. What does that mean? To put it simply, doing God's will is putting the Lord's words into practice and following His commandments. It means casting off sin and putting God's words into practice, and loving and submitting to God from the heart. People who are always lying, sinning, resisting God, and going against His requirements aren't doing His will, so are they worthy of entering the kingdom of heaven?" She said, "No. We're constantly lying, sinning with our words, and more believers are following worldly trends, chasing after money. We don't genuinely worship God and even pastors are no exception. How can we get into the kingdom of heaven that way?" I responded, "Yes. We've been redeemed by the Lord Jesus and our sins are forgiven, but we keep lying and sinning. We sin by day, confess by night. The Bible says: '**Without holiness no man shall see the Lord**' (Hebrews 12:14). We aren't holy now, and we aren't worthy of God's kingdom

this way. But everyone wants to be saved and get into His kingdom. So how does God make this happen for us? The Bible says: ‘So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin to salvation’ (Hebrews 9:28). The Lord comes again in the last days to save us, to fully free us from the bonds of sin, to make us people who submit to God and do His will, so we’re fully saved and can enter His kingdom.” She was really excited to hear this, and said, “I’d love to stop sinning. So how does God save us from sin?” I sent her a few verses of Scripture: **“Sanctify them through Your truth: Your word is truth”** (John 17:17). **“And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?”** (Revelation 5:1–2). **“Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof”** (Revelation 5:5). I said, “The Lord said that He would use the truth to sanctify humanity, and Revelation and the Book of Daniel both say that a sealed book will be opened in the last days. This book refers to the new words uttered by God in the last days, and this is the truth that will sanctify mankind. Only God Himself can unseal the book and express the truth to save mankind. The Lord utters many truths to purify and change us, to save us from sin when He comes in the last days. The Book of Revelation also says a number of times **‘He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches’** (Revelation Chapters 2, 3). God will speak to the churches in the last days. We just have to listen for His voice. We can’t welcome the Lord unless we hear His voice, and this is our only chance to be purified and saved by God, to be worthy of His kingdom.”

At this point in the fellowship, Teresa asked me, “Why would the Lord need to utter new words in the last days? I’ve read the Bible my whole life and it’s given me faith and taught me a lot, teaching me tolerance, patience, and forgiveness. I feel like the Bible is enough, and our pastor always says that all God’s words are in the Bible, that nothing outside of that is the word of God.” I could see that Teresa had some notions about the Lord speaking in the last days, that she wasn’t accepting it, so I didn’t directly refute what she’d said. I shared my own experience with her. I said, “I used to think the same thing. I thought that everything the Lord said was in the Bible, and there weren’t any new words from God outside of that. But later, I heard a brother mention something the Lord Jesus said that made me see it differently. The Lord Jesus said: **‘I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth’** (John 16:12–13). The Lord Jesus was very clear about that. He said He had a lot more things to share, but people lacked stature and couldn’t bear it then. He would speak more in the last days to guide people to understand and enter into all truths, so we can be freed from the bonds of sin and fully saved. Imagine a small child. When he’s young and his mom is teaching him to talk and walk, would she tell him to make a good living so he can take care of Mom and Dad? Of course not. He’d be too young to understand that, so at that age, his parents will just tell him things he can understand. Then when he grows up and learns more, they’ll tell him more about life, like how to find a job and have a family. That’s just like the Lord Jesus doing the work of redemption in the Age of Grace based on what His management plan and people required, expressing the way of repentance, teaching people to be humble and tolerant, to take up a cross, to forgive others seventy times seven. But there were other things the Lord Jesus didn’t tell people—all the truths to purify

and save mankind. He saved these for when the Lord comes in the last days, and this is the sealed book that was prophesied in the Book of Revelation. Over these 2,000 years, no one read that book, because it wasn't opened until the Lord came back in the last days. Do you think it would be possible for what's written in that book to be in the Bible?" She said earnestly, "It couldn't be in the Bible." I shared fellowship on this with her a few more times until she said she understood it.

I thought Sister Teresa's notions had been resolved, but the next day when I brought up the Lord speaking new words in the last days again, she said that all of the Lord's words for the last days should be in the Bible. At first I thought I'd heard wrong, but after confirming with her, I was so disappointed and discouraged. I thought that it was really hard to set up a time with her in the first place, and now she still didn't understand even after I explained it several times. Was she going to be able to understand this? I didn't say anything, but I started to think about beating a retreat. But then I realized that it wasn't that she hadn't taken anything from our fellowship. Putting someone into a box so easily wasn't in line with God's will. Then I suddenly remembered this from God's words: **"If God has entrusted to you the duty of spreading the gospel, you should accept God's commission, deferentially and obediently. You should endeavor to treat every person who is investigating the true way with love and patience, and you should be able to bear hardship and toil. Be diligent in taking responsibility for sharing the gospel; provide clear fellowship about the truth, so that you may give account of it to God. This is the attitude with which one should perform their duty"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). **"If a person investigating the true way repeatedly asks a question, how should you respond? You should not mind taking the**

time and trouble to answer them, and should find a way to fellowship clearly about their question, until they understand and do not ask it again. You will then have fulfilled your responsibility, and your heart will be free of guilt. Most importantly, you will be free of guilt toward God in this matter, because this duty, this responsibility, was entrusted to you by God” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). I felt ashamed of myself when I thought about what God requires. I’d only fellowshiped a few times, but I didn’t want to keep trying because she hadn’t let go of her notions yet. I wasn’t being loving. I had a lot of notions when I first became a believer, too, but brothers and sisters fellowshiped with me over and over, and prayed for me before I let go of those notions, and came before God to accept His salvation. This was because of God’s love and tolerance. So why wasn’t I able to patiently fellowship with her when I was sharing the gospel? At this point, I prayed to God, “Oh God, if she is one of Your sheep, please guide me. I’ll do everything I can to cooperate with You.” After praying, I thought about how the Bible had been Teresa’s foundation of faith all those years. It was understandable that she couldn’t entirely accept it right away when she heard that God’s new words for the last days aren’t in the Bible. I figured I could talk to her about it from a different perspective. After that, I shared a couple passages of God’s words with her: **“God Himself is life, and the truth, and His life and truth coexist. Those who are incapable of gaining the truth shall never gain life. Without the guidance, support, and provision of the truth, you shall only gain words, doctrines, and, above all, death. God’s life is ever-present, and His truth and life coexist. If you cannot find the source of truth, then you will not gain the nourishment of life; if you cannot gain the provision of life, then you will surely have no truth, and so apart from**

imagination and notions, the entirety of your body shall be nothing but your flesh—your stench-ridden flesh. Know that the words of books do not count as life, the records of history cannot be worshiped as the truth, and the regulations of the past cannot serve as an account of words presently spoken by God. Only that which is expressed by God when He comes to earth and lives among man is the truth, life, God’s will, and His current way of working” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Christ of the Last Days Can Give Man the Way of Eternal Life). **“The fact I wish to explain here is this: What God is and has is eternally inexhaustible and infinite. God is the source of life and all things; He cannot be fathomed by any created being. Lastly, I must continue to remind everybody: Do not delimit God in books, in words, or in His past utterances ever again. There is only one word to describe the characteristic of God’s work: new. He does not like to take old paths or repeat His work; moreover, He does not want people to worship Him by delimiting Him within a certain scope. This is God’s disposition”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Afterword). After that, I fellowshiped with her, “God is the Creator, and His wisdom is infinite. God can always express more truths based on His work plan and mankind’s needs. How could He be limited to what it says in the Bible? Isn’t that confining God to what the Bible contains?” Then I told her that Chinese fable about a frog at the bottom of a well. I said, “There was a frog that lived at the bottom of a well, and could only see the sky through the well’s opening, so it thought the sky was just as big as that opening. Then one day so much rain fell from a big storm that it could jump out of the well. It saw the limitless expanse of the sky, that it was actually so much bigger than the well’s opening. It realized it just had failed to see the whole sky because it was at the bottom of the well.” I said I’d felt that way too, and that my understanding of God

had been really shallow. God is so great, and we are so small. God is abundant! His words are like the living waters, eternally flowing and limitless. We can never know what He has and is with our own reasoning. How could we possibly delimit God? The Lord Jesus said **“I am the way, the truth, and the life”** (John 14:6). God is the fount of life. I asked her if God could express more truths than what’s in the Bible, things even higher than that, everything people need in the last days. She said, “Of course He can.” I could see that her notions were starting to give way, her heart was opening up. I sent her that same verse: **“He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”** (Revelation 2:7). I told her that what the Spirit says to the churches is precisely what the Lord Jesus says when He returns in the last days. And the Bible has a record of what God talked about and did in the Age of Law and the Age of Grace. That was all recorded by human beings and then compiled into one book after God had done that work. When I asked if the new words expressed by the Lord Jesus when He returns could be in the Bible beforehand, she smiled and said, “Now I understand. The Lord’s words when He returns aren’t in the Bible, and God can utter words outside of the Bible.” She was really deeply moved, and said that people don’t understand God well enough. She wanted to read more of God’s words and understand Him more.

I was thrilled, and so grateful for God’s guidance, to see Teresa acknowledge that the Lord will return and speak again. So I asked her, “Since the Lord will return and speak more, what medium do you think He will use for His utterances?” She said, “Through the Spirit.” I told her that’s what I used to think too, but I investigated the Scripture with brothers and sisters and saw that it says: **“For as the lightning, that lightens out of the one part under heaven, shines to the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things,**

and be rejected of this generation” (Luke 17:24–25); **“And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man”** (Luke 17:26); **“Be you also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes”** (Matthew 24:44). I said, “These verses all mention that the Lord will return as ‘the Son of man.’ The Son of man means He is born of man and has normal humanity. He wouldn’t be called that if He were in spiritual form. Jehovah God was in spiritual form, so He wasn’t called the Son of man. That means the Lord returns in the flesh in the last days. If He came in a resurrected spiritual body, coming on a cloud and appearing openly to all people, everyone would prostrate themselves, trembling in fear, and no one would dare reject Him. Then how would the Lord’s words **‘first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation’** be fulfilled?” It looked like Teresa was pondering something, so I went on to ask her, “When the Lord appears and works in the last days, why would He decide to come in the flesh and not as a Spirit?” She shook her head. I said, “People can’t see or touch God in spiritual form. If a spiritual body suddenly appeared and spoke, how would you feel?” She said, “Scared.” I responded, “Yes, people would be afraid and confused. Does God want everyone to feel scared when He’s speaking to us? Definitely not. And corrupt humanity is too tainted; we’re not worthy of seeing God’s Spirit. Seeing God’s Spirit would just kill us. That’s why it’s so important for us, corrupt humanity, for God to come in the flesh in the last days to express truths for our salvation.” After that I read a couple more passages of God’s words for her: **“God’s saving of man is not done directly using the method of the Spirit and the identity of the Spirit, for His Spirit can neither be touched nor seen by man, neither can man draw near. If He tried to save man directly using the perspective of the Spirit, man would be unable to receive His salvation. If God did not put on the**

outward form of a created man, there would be no way for man to receive this salvation. For man has no way of approaching Him, much as no one was able to go near the cloud of Jehovah. Only by becoming a created human being, that is, only by putting His word into the body of flesh that He is about to become, can He personally work the word into all who follow Him. Only then can man personally see and hear His word, and moreover enter into possession of His word, and by this means come to be fully saved. If God did not become flesh, no one of flesh and blood would be able to receive such great salvation, nor would a single person be saved. If the Spirit of God worked directly in the midst of mankind, all humanity would be struck down, or else, with no way of coming into touch with God, they would be completely carried away captive by Satan” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Mystery of the Incarnation (4)). **“This was the advantage of God becoming flesh: He could take advantage of mankind’s knowledge and use human language to speak to people, and to express His will. He explained or ‘translated’ to man His profound, divine language that people struggled to understand in human language, in a human way. This helped people understand His will and know what He wanted to do. He could also have conversations with people from the human perspective, using human language, and communicate with people in a way they understood. He could even speak and work using human language and knowledge so that people could feel God’s kindness and closeness, so that they could see His heart”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God’s Work, God’s Disposition, and God Himself III). After reading God’s words, I continued my fellowship: “God decided to come in the flesh, and live a real life among us so He could be closer to us, and provide us with the truth to save us. It’s just like parents with their child. Would a parent want their child to be afraid

every time he sees them? Of course not. Parents would never want their child to be afraid, to hide whenever he sees them, so what about God? If God just spoke from the heavens, we would be afraid and pull away from Him. God doesn't want us to pull away, to feel He's hard to be close to, so the Lord's return in the last days is just like when the Lord Jesus appeared and worked. He came in the flesh, as a regular, normal Son of man, eating and speaking with His disciples, and always helping resolve their problems and confusions. Seeing the true living God really living among man helps us feel much closer to God. We want to draw closer to Him, to lean on Him. God incarnate can interact with us without any distance, and He can use our own language to express the truth, to sustain and nourish us. He can use examples and analogies so we can understand His will better, and then it's easier for us to understand and enter into the truth. God's love for us is so practical, so real! By becoming flesh, God tolerates enormous humiliation and suffering to speak and work for us to understand the truth, be freed from sin, and fully saved. This is His salvation for corrupt humanity." At this point, Teresa was moved to tears. She said, "I get it now. The Lord is returning in incarnate form in the last days. I want God to come among us in the flesh, too. God has paid such a great price for our salvation. We're not worthy of it..." I was really touched to see how moved Teresa was, and I remembered something God said: **"Are you able to communicate the disposition expressed by God in each age in a concrete way, with language that suitably conveys the significance of the age? Are you, who experience God's work of the last days, able to describe God's righteous disposition in detail? Can you testify about God's disposition clearly and accurately? How will you pass on what you have seen and experienced to those pitiable, poor, and devout religious believers who hunger and thirst for righteousness and are waiting for you to**

shepherd them?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How Should You Attend to Your Future Mission?). **“To bear witness to God’s work, you must rely on your experience, knowledge, and the price you have paid. Only thus can you satisfy His will”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). When I was sharing the gospel before that, often I was just sharing theories with people and I’d never thought about whether I had a genuine understanding of God, whether I could share testimony from my real, personal experiences. This experience showed me that sharing the gospel isn’t just talking to other people, but it’s a chance for me to know God better. I could feel God’s love through my fellowship with Teresa, too. If He hadn’t come to work and speak in the flesh, there’s no way we could understand the truth or have our corrupt dispositions cleansed. We’d just end up destroyed in the disasters. The more I thought about it, the more I felt how great and how real God’s love for us is.

After our fellowship, Teresa said, “Today’s fellowship is all completely new to me. I’ve really gained so much from this.” I was thrilled to hear her say this, and I told her, “The Lord Jesus has already returned as Almighty God incarnate. Almighty God has expressed new words and is doing the judgment work of the last days to fully cleanse and save mankind. This fulfills biblical prophecies, including **‘For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God’** (1 Peter 4:17), and **‘The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son’** (John 5:22).” Teresa was really excited to hear that the Lord has already returned, but she was confused, too. She asked me, “The Lord Jesus already forgave our sins when He was crucified. Why would the Lord need to return and do the work of judgment to save man in the last days?” I read her two passages of Almighty God’s words to address her question: **“You only know that Jesus**

shall descend during the last days, but how exactly will He descend? A sinner such as you, who has just been redeemed, and has not been changed, or been perfected by God, can you be after God's heart? For you, you who are still of your old self, it is true that you were saved by Jesus, and that you are not counted as a sinner because of the salvation of God, but this does not prove that you are not sinful, and are not impure. How can you be saintly if you have not been changed? Within, you are beset by impurity, selfish and mean, yet you still wish to descend with Jesus—you should be so lucky! You have missed a step in your belief in God: You have merely been redeemed, but you have not been changed. For you to be after God's heart, God must personally do the work of changing and cleansing you; if you are only redeemed, you will be incapable of attaining sanctity. In this way you will be unqualified to share in the good blessings of God, for you have missed out a step in God's work of managing man, which is the key step of changing and perfecting. You, a sinner who has just been redeemed, are therefore incapable of directly inheriting God's inheritance” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Concerning Appellations and Identity). “Though Jesus did much work among man, He only completed the redemption of all mankind and became man's sin offering; He did not rid man of all his corrupt disposition. Fully saving man from the influence of Satan not only required Jesus to become the sin offering and bear the sins of man, but it also required God to do even greater work to rid man completely of his satanically corrupted disposition. And so, now that man has been forgiven of his sins, God has returned to the flesh to lead man into the new age, and begun the work of chastisement and judgment. This work has brought man into a higher realm. All those who submit under His dominion shall enjoy higher truth and receive

greater blessings. They shall truly live in the light, and they shall gain the truth, the way, and the life” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). After reading God’s words, I said, “The Lord Jesus did redeem us. What did this redemption achieve? We were redeemed of our sins so we’re no longer punished for violating the law. This is what the Lord Jesus’ work of redemption accomplished. Our sins are forgiven through our faith in the Lord, but we still can’t help but lie and sin all the time. We live in the vicious cycle of sinning by day, confessing by night, never able to escape the shackles of sin. Why is this? It’s because we haven’t gotten rid of our sinful nature. This sinful nature is like a malignant tumor deep inside of us. If it’s not removed, we can be forgiven a thousand times, ten thousand times, but we’ll never be freed from sin or be worthy of the kingdom of heaven. This is why the Lord needs to return, express truths, and do the work of judgment. That judgment work is to resolve our sinful natures so that we can be completely free of the shackles of sin, and be purified and completely saved.”

Teresa was really happy to hear this and said urgently, “Can you tell me about the judgment work? How does God carry out this judgment to save us from sin?” I read her a passage of God’s words: **“Christ of the last days uses a variety of truths to teach man, to expose the substance of man, and to dissect the words and deeds of man. These words comprise various truths, such as man’s duty, how man should obey God, how man should be loyal to God, how man ought to live out normal humanity, as well as the wisdom and the disposition of God, and so on. These words are all directed at the substance of man and his corrupt disposition. In particular, the words that expose how man spurns God are spoken in regard to how man is an embodiment of Satan, and an enemy force against God. In undertaking His work of judgment, God**

does not simply make clear the nature of man with a few words; He exposes, deals with, and prunes over the long term. All these different methods of exposure, dealing, and pruning cannot be substituted with ordinary words, but with the truth of which man is utterly bereft. Only methods such as these can be called judgment; only through judgment of this kind can man be subdued and thoroughly convinced about God, and moreover gain true knowledge of God. What the work of judgment brings about is man's understanding of the true face of God and the truth about his own rebelliousness. The work of judgment allows man to gain much understanding of the will of God, of the purpose of God's work, and of the mysteries that are incomprehensible to him. It also allows man to recognize and know his corrupt essence and the roots of his corruption, as well as to discover the ugliness of man. These effects are all brought about by the work of judgment, for the essence of this work is actually the work of opening up the truth, the way, and the life of God to all those who have faith in Him. This work is the work of judgment done by God" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Christ Does the Work of Judgment With the Truth). After reading this, I said, "In the last days, God performs His judgment with words to expose mankind's satanic nature of resisting God. It reveals all our expressions of our satanic disposition and resistance to God so we learn the truth of how deeply Satan has corrupted us while also seeing God's holy, righteous disposition. By being judged, chastised, pruned and dealt with by God's words, we see all of the satanic dispositions we reveal, like being arrogant and deceitful. We may be able to make sacrifices for God, but when something happens that we don't like, like getting sick or facing disaster, we misunderstand and blame God. Only then do we see that we still have an anti-God nature, and even though we make sacrifices for God, it's just for blessings and rewards,

and to get into the kingdom of heaven. We're doing a deal with God. We don't have true devotion or submission to God, much less true love. Through the judgment and chastisement of God's words and what's revealed by the things that happen to us, we see the truth of our corruption and come to hate it. We also experience God's holy, righteous disposition that will tolerate no offense and we have a heart that fears and obeys God. This is the only way we can see how deeply Satan has corrupted us. Without God's judgment and chastisement in the last days, we'd never be able to see the truth of our corruption or be freed of it. We'd especially never have love or obedience for God. Just like someone who is sick, if they don't know something is wrong with them, they won't go get treatment or know what treatment they need, so they won't get better. But if they go to the doctor, the doctor can tell them what's wrong, what's causing it, and how to treat it, and they'll get better if they follow the doctor's advice. So God judges mankind with His words in the last days to resolve our sinful nature and satanic dispositions. We have to accept that judgment and chastisement of His words to be freed from sin, get rid of our corrupt, satanic dispositions, be saved by God, and get into the kingdom of heaven." At that point, Teresa said, "I understand now. The work of judgment is God cleansing and saving us. I want to escape this life of sinning and confessing, so I need to accept God's judgment and cleansing." We watched a few gospel movies together after that and then read a lot of Almighty God's words. Teresa told me excitedly, "These words have such authority and power. They're earth-shaking. This is the voice of God! Almighty God really is the Lord Jesus returned. He's the Lord come back to purify and save us!" Then she asked me urgently, "How can I get a copy of Almighty God's words? Where can I fellowship with other believers in person?" I said I could introduce her to local church members and sent her the online

version of **The Word Appears in the Flesh**. She was really excited—her eyes got really big, and she said she wanted to get the book and read Almighty God’s words as soon as possible. Seeing how exhilarated she was to welcome the Lord, I was really grateful for God’s enlightenment and guidance that allowed Teresa to hear God’s voice and come into His house.

Two or three days later, she told me that she’d told her closest friend the news that the Lord has already returned, who warned her against believing it. Her pastor had also been calling her and threatening her, saying she would get kicked out of the church if she kept her faith in Almighty God. She said, “I’m certain that Almighty God is Christ of the last days because His words are the truth, and only Christ can express the truth. He is the Lord Jesus returned. I won’t be affected by my friend, and the pastor can’t stop me.” She also said, “I’ve been looking for a real church for years, but I’ve always been disappointed. None of them are nurturing, and more and more members are following worldly trends. I was feeling helpless. I’m so grateful to God. I’d never dreamed that I would hear God’s voice and welcome the Lord. I’ve finally found God’s church.” She was really emotional and I could see tears in her eyes—she looked so hopeful. I was incredibly moved. I saw that when one of God’s sheep hears His voice, they will follow Him and keep their faith no matter how Satan interferes. But thinking about how I’d been discouraged and wanted to give up when I hit a roadblock, and I was ready to write her off, nearly giving up on sharing testimony with her on God’s work of the last days, I was full of regret and guilt. I also saw how only God really loves us and cares for us, because when I was about to give up, God’s words enlightened and guided me just in time, so I could see my rebelliousness and understand the urgency of God’s will to save man. Then I could change bit by bit and fulfill my duty.

This was also a profound experience for me that sharing the gospel is using my own experience and understanding of God's work and words to bear witness to God, to bring people who long for the Lord's return before God. Nothing is more meaningful. I also felt God's urgent will, and His hope that more true believers will come before Him and receive His salvation. There are so many people from every denomination struggling with the agony of living in darkness, longing for God to appear. God is full of sorrow, and He's anxious for them. So I felt even more that sharing the gospel is my responsibility. I swore to God that no matter what roadblocks I encounter, I'll lean on Him and fulfill my duty and responsibility in sharing the gospel. I'll share testimony based on my true understanding of God and bring His sheep before Him, so that they can receive His salvation in the last days very soon.

28. My Story of Collaboration

By Leanne, USA

I was responsible for the watering work in a church. As the gospel expanded and more people accepted God's work in the last days, I wasn't just watering newcomers, but also following up with the work of waterers, and helping them resolve their problems and difficulties. I couldn't keep up with everything, so some new believers weren't being watered in time and lost enthusiasm for gatherings. My leader decided to have Sister Carmen work with me, to prevent delays in work. I was happy to hear that, because Carmen could find problems with the work and took on a burden in her duty. She always got good results in watering. Partnering with her would make up for my shortcomings and also take some work pressure off of me.

Later, I added Carmen to the watering team. Some people on the watering team were fairly passive at the time, and Carmen started fellowshiping on God's words to resolve their states. She responded immediately when team members asked questions. I felt uncomfortable to see all of that. I was thinking that when I was in sole charge of work-related things before, I was always the one to respond to their questions, but with her arrival she'd taken on a leading role, leaving me in the shadows. Plus, she had an illumination in her fellowship that I didn't, so everyone was surely going to think she was better than me. This thought left me really uncomfortable. I felt like she was stealing my thunder, making me look inferior to her in every respect, and I didn't feel great about her. I stopped reading the messages she sent to the team and didn't actively communicate with her—I was deliberately isolating her. Since I wasn't actively keeping Carmen up to date with our work, even after a few days she couldn't figure out the true states of the brothers and sisters, and our work didn't pick up. I

knew I should have gone to talk to watering team members about their states and struggles to fellowship and resolve them right away. But then I thought about Carmen taking on a leading role and there being a tacit understanding among everyone that it was mainly her handling the watering work. I was afraid that if I resolved the team members' problems and the work turned out well, some brothers and sisters who didn't know the actual situation would say it was thanks to Carmen, and they'd look up to her even more. Then I'd be invisible. So, I didn't fellowship with the watering team members. A few days went by and the effectiveness of our watering work kept declining. I saw that Carmen seemed anxious and she kept sending God's words to the group for fellowship, but I was unconcerned, even reveling in it a bit. I felt like it was better the work wasn't doing great, so the leader would say Carmen was no good and didn't match up to me. I wasn't really comfortable with these thoughts, but I didn't seriously reflect on them at the time.

One day, a leader told me that our watering work hadn't been doing well recently, that Carmen wanted to learn about newcomers, so I should add her to their gathering groups. My heart thumped when I heard the leader say this was to be arranged. I thought about how Carmen was more skilled than me, that if she joined those group gatherings, acquainted herself with and resolved the new believers' issues really quickly, getting a handle on our work, I'd be outclassed by her. I didn't want her to go to all the groups, and thought I could figure things out myself. So I found excuses to refuse. I felt guilty about it afterward and prayed to God. Through prayer, I realized that I was just protecting my own name and status by doing this, and that this wasn't in line with God's will. But I wasn't happy to have Carmen in every gathering group right away, and I was afraid she'd eventually take my position away from me. Then I thought of how those

religious clergy do everything they can to seal off the churches to protect their status and hold onto their livelihood, keeping believers tightly within their grasp, not letting them look into God's work of the last days or welcome the Lord's return. They go head-to-head with God and are the antichrists revealed by God's work of the last days. I wasn't letting Carmen get involved with our work so I could protect my reputation and status. Wasn't I also keeping the brothers and sisters tightly within my grasp? I was opposing God, just like the clergy. I knew I had to change course right away and forsake my incorrect motives. The next day, I included Carmen in the gathering groups, and I felt a bit more at ease.

Even though I added her to the gathering groups, I didn't seek her out to discuss the work, so each of us was still doing our own thing. A couple of weeks went by, and our watering work still wasn't improving. When the leader asked me why this was, I didn't know how to respond. I felt sort of guilty later on, and then I read these words from God in my devotionals and reflection: **"People do not have a fundamental or essential understanding of themselves; instead, they focus and devote their energy on coming to know their actions and outward revelations. Even if some people are occasionally able to say a bit about their self-knowledge, it will not be very profound. No person has ever thought that they are a certain type of person or that they have a certain type of nature because they did a certain type of thing or revealed a certain thing. God has exposed the nature and essence of man, but what people understand is that their ways of doing things and their ways of speaking are flawed and defective; as a result, it is a relatively strenuous task for them to put the truth into practice. People think that their mistakes are merely momentary manifestations that are revealed carelessly, rather than outpourings of their nature. When people think**

in this way, it is very difficult for them to truly know themselves, and very difficult for them to understand and practice the truth. Because they do not know the truth and do not thirst after it, when putting the truth into practice, they merely follow rules in a perfunctory way. People do not view their own nature as being very bad, and believe that they are not bad to the extent that they should be destroyed or punished. Yet according to God's standards, people are too deeply corrupted, they are still far from the standards for salvation, because they merely possess some approaches that do not outwardly appear to violate the truth, and in fact, they do not practice the truth and are not obedient to God" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three).

Pondering this, I understood that for self-knowledge I should compare my thoughts, motives and perspectives to God's words, that I should know and dissect my nature essence, and the path I was on, and then seek to resolve that with the truth. That's the only way to truly change and repent. If we just acknowledge we have corrupt dispositions or that we did something wrong without knowing our own nature essence, without seeing how deeply corrupted we are, or how dangerous the state we're in is, then we won't long to seek the truth and pursue change, much less truly repent. I saw I'd just been acknowledging I was protecting my name and status, and how not wanting to let Carmen join the groups was resisting God, but I didn't understand clearly at all what kind of disposition I was revealing, what its essence was, and what path I was on in my duty. Though I did end up adding her to the groups, it was just a change in behavior and I did not resolve my corrupt disposition. Plus I didn't truly put my ego aside and collaborate with her. How could our work succeed in that way? I said a prayer when I realized that, asking God to guide me to truly know myself.

I saw these words of God in my devotionals one day: **“Some people always fear that others are better than they are or above them, that other people will be recognized while they get overlooked, and this leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being envious of people with talent? Is that not selfish and contemptible? What kind of disposition is this? It is maliciousness! Those who only think about their own interests, who only satisfy their own selfish desires, without thinking about others or considering the interests of God’s house, have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). **“Antichrists expropriate everything from the house of God and the property of the church, and treat them as their personal property, all of which is to be managed by them, without anyone else interfering. The only things they think about when doing the work of the church are their own interests, their own status, and their own pride. They do not allow anyone to harm their interests, much less do they allow anyone of caliber or anyone who is able to speak of their experiential testimony to threaten their status and prestige. And so, they try to undermine and exclude as competitors those who are able to offer experiential testimony, and who can fellowship the truth and provide for God’s chosen ones, and they desperately try to isolate those people completely from everyone else, to drag their names thoroughly through the mud, and to bring them down. Only then will the antichrists feel at peace. If these people are never negative, and are able to carry on performing their duty, speaking of their testimony, and supporting others, then the antichrists will turn to their last resort, which is to find faults with them and condemn them, or to frame them and fabricate reasons to harass and**

punish them, until they get them thrown out of the church. Only then will the antichrists completely relax. This is what is most insidious and vicious about the antichrists. ... When someone distinguishes themselves with a little work, or when someone is able to offer true experiential testimony in order to benefit, edify, and support God's chosen ones, and earns great praise from everyone, envy and hate grows in the hearts of the antichrists, and they try to alienate and suppress them. They do not, under any circumstances, allow such people to undertake any work, in order to prevent them from threatening their status. People with the truth reality serve to accentuate and highlight the poverty, wretchedness, ugliness, and wickedness of the antichrists when they're in their presence, so when an antichrist chooses a partner or co-worker, they never select people with the truth reality, they never select people who can speak of their experiential testimony, and they never select honest people or people who are able to practice the truth. These are the people the antichrists envy and hate the most, and they are a thorn in the side of the antichrists. No matter how much these people who practice the truth do that is good or of benefit to the work of God's house, the antichrists will try their hardest to cover these deeds up. They will even twist the facts to claim the credit for good things while shifting the blame for bad things onto others, as a means to elevate themselves and belittle other people. Antichrists have a great jealousy and hatred toward those who pursue the truth and are able to speak of their experiential testimony. They are fearful that these people will threaten their own status, and so they do all they can to attack and exclude them. They prohibit the brothers and sisters from going near them, coming into contact with them, or from supporting or praising these people who are able to

speak of their experiential testimony. This is what most exposes the satanic nature of antichrists, which is sick of the truth and hates God. And so, too, does it prove that the antichrists are an evil countercurrent in the church, that they are the ones to blame for the disturbance to church work and impedance of God's will" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)).

God says that antichrists especially treasure status, and when anyone appears that threatens their status within their sphere of work, they oppress and isolate that person. They don't let them take on important or leading roles, and antichrists will even sacrifice the interests of the church to protect their own status. They're especially selfish and malicious. Was my behavior not just like that of an antichrist? Since Carmen came to work with me, I saw she was better at that work and at fellowshiping the truth than I was. I was upset by that, and I took her as my enemy, my adversary. I thought with her arrival, she was taking on a leading role and stealing all my thunder, and that if she further improved our work performance, it would make me look incompetent. Because of this I intentionally isolated her instead of actively collaborating with her and familiarizing her with our work. When I saw that our watering work was suffering, I didn't perform follow-up work or resolve the problems, rather I was afraid that if I resolved the problems and we did better as a result, then Carmen would get the credit. Even worse, when I saw the effectiveness of our work kept declining, I wasn't worried, and even reveled in it. I was pleased that the work was suffering, and I thought the leader would think I was better than her because of this, and that my position would be secure. I only cared about my own name and status and didn't remotely consider her struggles or what the consequences would be if it resulted in newcomers being poorly watered. I was so selfish and malicious! When the leader had me bring Carmen into the groups, I dug

my heels in even more. I felt like she was about to surpass me or even replace me, so I found reasons to refuse. To maintain my position, I ostracized her and treated the church like my personal territory. Within my own realm of responsibility, I didn't give her any chance to stand out or let her strengths shine. I was being a dictator. Wasn't this revealing an antichrist's disposition? I was kind of shocked. I never thought I could be so arrogant and malicious, that I could be so ostracizing just to maintain my own status. I wasn't considering newcomers' watering or whether the work of the church was suffering at all, and I just wanted to satisfy my own wild ambitions. I was truly drunk on name and status.

Then I read this passage of God's words: **"If someone says they love the truth and that they pursue the truth, but in essence, the goal they pursue is to distinguish themselves, to show off, to make people think highly of them, to achieve their own interests, and the performing of their duty is not to obey or satisfy God, and instead is to achieve fame, gain, and status, then their pursuit is illegitimate. That being the case, when it comes to the work of the church, are their actions an obstacle, or do they help move it forward? They are clearly an obstacle; they do not move it forward. Some people wave the banner of doing the work of the church yet pursue their own personal fame, gain, and status, run their own operation, create their own little group, their own little kingdom—is this kind of person doing their duty? All the work they do essentially disrupts, disturbs, and impairs the work of the church. What is the consequence of their pursuit of fame, gain, and status? First, this affects how God's chosen people eat and drink God's word normally and understand the truth, it hinders their life entry, stops them from entering the right track of faith in God, and leads them onto the wrong path—which harms the chosen ones, and brings them to**

ruin. And what does it ultimately do to the work of the church? It is disturbance, impairment, and dismantlement. This is the consequence brought about by people's pursuit of fame, gain, and status. When they do their duty in this way, can this not be defined as walking the path of an antichrist? When God asks that people put aside fame, gain, and status, it is not that He is depriving people of the right to choose; rather, it is because, while pursuing fame, gain, and status, people disrupt and disturb the work of the church and the life entry of God's chosen people, and can even have an influence on more people's eating and drinking God's words, understanding the truth, and thus achieving God's salvation. This is an indisputable fact. When people pursue their own fame, gain, and status, it is certain that they will not pursue the truth and that they will not faithfully fulfill their duty. They will only speak and act for the sake of fame, gain, and status, and all the work they do, without the least exception, is for those things' sake. To behave and act in such a way is, without question, to walk the path of antichrists; it is a disruption and disturbance of God's work, and all its various consequences are hindering the spread of the kingdom gospel and the free flow of God's will within the church. So, one may say with certainty that the path walked by those who pursue fame, gain, and status is the path of resistance against God. It is intentional resistance against Him, naysaying Him—it is to cooperate with Satan in resisting God and standing in opposition to Him. This is the nature of people's pursuit of fame, gain, and status. The problem with people pursuing their own interests is that the goals they pursue are the goals of Satan—they are goals that are wicked and unjust. When people pursue personal interests such as fame, gain, and status, they unwittingly become a tool of Satan, they become an outlet for Satan, and, moreover,

they become an embodiment of Satan. They play a negative role in the church; toward the work of the church, and toward the normal church life and normal pursuit of God's chosen people, the effect they have is to disturb and impair; they have an adverse and negative effect" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)). I was trembling with fear after I read that. God reveals that our pursuit of name and status is the running of our own enterprise, and that it is taking an antichrist's path. In essence, it's acting as Satan's minion, and it is disrupting the work of the church. It offends God's disposition. I got more nervous the more I thought about it. The gospel work was at a peak, and more and more people were accepting God's work in the last days. Being in charge of watering, I really should have been thinking of God's will, immediately supporting and watering newcomers, and helping with their notions and confusion, so they could quickly lay a foundation on the true way. But I was chasing name and status instead of attending to my work. I wasn't putting effort into my duty, paying a price or thinking about how to best water newcomers, and I didn't even want anyone else involved. Wasn't I disrupting the work of the church? Wasn't I a stumbling block for God's salvation of others? I was Satan's tool, playing a negative role, and I was walking an antichrist's path against God. I was responsible for the watering work, but couldn't handle it on my own, so the leader arranged for Carmen to help me, which was a good thing, and any conscientious or reasonable person would have actively collaborated with someone else to offer support and watering for new believers as soon as possible. But I wasn't thinking of the work of the church whatsoever. To maintain my name and status, I excluded Carmen, kept her from the brothers and sisters, and prevented her helping them resolve their problems, which was a serious hindrance to our watering work and delayed the life entry of the brothers and sisters. That wasn't doing my duty. It was clearly

doing evil. If I still didn't repent, I knew God would expose and cast me out as an antichrist. This was a terrifying thing for me to realize, and I really regretted all of my actions and conduct. I said a prayer, "Oh God, I've been pursuing name and status, disrupting the church's work. I am without any humanity. Everything I do is against You. God, I want to repent to You..."

I read another passage of God's words after that: **"Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; do not consider the interests of man, and give no thought to your own pride, reputation, and status. You must first consider the interests of God's house, and make them your priority. You should be considerate of God's will and begin by contemplating whether or not there have been impurities in the performance of your duty, whether you have been devoted, fulfilled your responsibilities, and given it your all, as well as whether or not you have been wholeheartedly thinking about your duty and the work of the church. You must consider these things. If you think about them frequently and figure them out, it will be easier for you to perform your duty well. If you are of poor caliber, if your experience is shallow, or if you are not proficient in your professional work, then there may be some mistakes or deficiencies in your work, and you may not get good results—but you will have done your best. You do not satisfy your own selfish desires or preferences. Instead, you give constant consideration to the work of the church and the interests of the house of God. Though you may not achieve good results in your duty, your heart will have been set straight; if, on top of this, you can seek the truth to solve the problems in your duty, you will be up to standard in the performance of your duty, and, at the same time, you will be able to enter into the truth reality. This is what it means to possess testimony"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last

Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). Reading God's words was enlightening for me. In a duty, the interests of the church have to come first, and we should put everything we have into the duty. We shouldn't calculate things for name and status, and we have to cooperate and be of one heart and mind with our brothers and sisters, do our utmost to work according to principles so we can gain the Holy Spirit's work and get results from our work with ease. So I went to talk to Carmen and opened up to her about my corruption I had revealed and talked about what I'd learned about myself. I felt so much freer after our fellowship, and I was ready to collaborate with her on our watering work.

Before long, I found out a couple of new believers who'd been reluctant to go to gatherings had gotten Carmen's help, resolved their notions, were now regularly attending gatherings, and wanted to take on a duty. I felt a little displeased again. I hadn't really understood their issues before, but Carmen took care of it. Didn't that make me look inferior to her? At that thought, I realized I wasn't thinking about it properly, and I remembered something God said: **"Cooperation among brothers and sisters is a process of offsetting one's weaknesses with another's strengths. You use your strengths to compensate for others' shortcomings, and others use their strengths to make up for your insufficiencies. This is what it means to offset one's weaknesses with others' strengths and to cooperate harmoniously. Only when cooperating in harmony can people be blessed before God, and the more of this one experiences, the more reality they possess, their path grows brighter as they walk it, and they become ever more at ease"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. On Harmonious Cooperation). Carmen was better than me at fellowshiping the truth and solving problems, so I needed to learn from her. So, I asked her how she fellowshiped and resolved

the newcomers' issues, and with her fellowship she gave me some insight into how to handle their problems. I felt like it was great working with her, that she could make up for my faults and that this was God's grace. After that, when I noticed some brothers and sisters were passive in their duty, I sought out Carmen for discussion to see what the root of their negativity was and what kind of truth we should fellowship with them to resolve this. We quickly found the relevant words of God to fellowship with them. They became more active in their duty after this fellowship. Some were watering new believers, some were sharing the gospel. Gradually, more people were doing a duty in the church. Through some support and watering, more newcomers gained a foundation on the true way, and most of them were gathering regularly and doing a duty. After that, when I had problems in my duty, I'd discuss them with Carmen right away, and when she saw that the brothers and sisters were having issues in their duties, she'd tell me about them immediately so that I could follow up on the matters and resolve them. We worked with one another, with one heart and one mind, and I felt much more at peace.

This experience showed me that pursuing name and status is walking an antichrist's path, working as Satan's minion, and disrupting the church's work. Were it not for the judgment and revelation of God's words, I never would have been aware of the corruption I was revealing or my antichrist disposition, and I would never have let go of my desire for status and collaborated with Carmen. I'm deeply grateful for God's salvation!

29. Judgment and Chastisement Is God's Love

By Rebecca, USA

God's words say: **"What testimony does man ultimately bear to God? Man testifies that God is the righteous God, that His disposition is righteousness, wrath, chastisement, and judgment; man testifies to the righteous disposition of God. God uses His judgment to make man perfect, He has loved man, and saved man—but how much is contained within His love? There is judgment, majesty, wrath, and curse. Though God cursed man in the past, He did not completely cast man into the bottomless pit, but used that means to refine man's faith; He did not put man to death, but acted in order to make man perfect. The substance of the flesh is that which is of Satan—God said it exactly right—but the facts carried out by God are not completed according to His words. He curses you so that you might love Him, and so that you might know the substance of the flesh; He chastises you so that you might be awakened, to allow you to know the deficiencies within you, and to know man's utter unworthiness. Thus, God's curses, His judgment, and His majesty and wrath—they are all in order to make man perfect. All that God does today, and the righteous disposition that He makes plain within you—it is all in order to make man perfect. Such is the love of God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). When people mentioned God's love, I used to think of His mercy and compassion, His grace and blessings. I didn't really understand His love of judgment and chastisement. But after practical experience with it, I gained some personal understanding and saw that God's words are the truth, and all so practical, and that judgment and chastisement is God's love and salvation for mankind.

I used to be responsible for the watering work, and then September of last year I was dismissed for not doing practical work. The church leader arranged for Sister Joyce to take over my work. That left me with a feeling I can't put into words. I'd overseen Joyce's work before, and now she was going to oversee mine. Didn't that make me look incompetent? I'd gone from someone in charge to a regular member of the watering team. Wouldn't that be humiliating if the brothers and sisters who knew me found out? This thought really made me regret not doing my duty well. Later in a team's discussion about our work, everyone was silent for quite a while. I thought that even though I wasn't in charge anymore, I did have some experience with watering the new believers, so I should take on a burden and express my thoughts. That way everyone would see I was still playing an important role, and everyone might look up to me. So I started proactively pitching in with my thoughts and ideas, and after a few discussions, people mostly agreed with my opinion. In nearly every discussion, we went with my ideas, so I felt like my capabilities really stood out in the team. I didn't have the role of supervisor, but I could still handle that kind of work. I thought the others would look up to me, and then one day I might be promoted again. I started pitching in more actively after that, and before every gathering, I'd try to get an understanding of how the newcomers were doing and find relevant words of God. It took a lot of time and energy, but I figured that doing a good job would prove my capability, so paying that price was well worth it. I was proactive in my duty, was able to discover some issues in our work, and others agreed with the solutions and suggestions I came up with. I was feeling like everyone could see how hard I was working, so I might get promoted when the leader reviewed our work and saw how I was doing. But some time passed, and the leader didn't seem to have any intention of promoting me. I noticed that more and more

new believers were joining the church, so more people were needed to take on positions, but it didn't seem like there was any thought of promoting me. Seeing this got me kind of down. I felt like I'd made some changes and was doing pretty well in my duty. Since the church was so short of help, why wasn't I getting another chance? After being dismissed once, would I never have another chance to be in charge? It didn't make any sense to me. I didn't know why all my hard work wasn't paying off. What was I lacking? Later on, I thought I must not be working hard enough or good enough, or I wasn't achieving enough. I figured I needed to keep working hard, and not only focus on achievements in my duty, but also on life entry and pursuing the truth, so others could see my personal progress. Then God would have mercy on me and give me a chance. I thought that with "proper" pursuit, there would be a change one day, and even if I wasn't promoted, I could stand out in our team and gain the other brothers' and sisters' admiration. So I threw myself into our team's watering work, and when newcomers had problems, I'd carefully think them over, finding God's words to fellowship on. When I didn't understand something, I'd earnestly pray and seek. After some time, I was more and more successful in watering newcomers. Some time later in a gathering, the team leader mentioned I'd shouldered a burden for my duty, and was good at resolving new believers' issues. I felt very pleased with myself. I thought everyone would start seeing how well I was doing, and if I could improve my performance more, I could win everyone's admiration. Then I'd have a shot at promotion. I really threw myself into my duty after that. Aside from my own responsibilities, I also took on as much of the team's other work as I could, and provided feedback and assistance to the supervisor when I discovered issues. I didn't slack on my pursuit of the truth, either, but read God's words in every spare moment. I'd come before God in prayer and seeking whenever I felt off and actively

engage in fellowship in gatherings. But I was pretty disappointed when I still wasn't promoted after quite a while of hard work. I felt like no matter how hard I worked or how well I did, the leader would never promote me. So what was the point of all of it? After that, I stopped putting so much effort in, and when I saw newcomers failing to gather regularly, I just casually asked about it without any detailed inquiry or support. Sometimes when Joyce had me find words of God for brothers' and sisters' particular issues or shortcomings before the gatherings, I felt like that wasn't my job, and no one would notice no matter how well I did, so I'd fob it off with an excuse. My own state started deteriorating and I didn't know what to say in prayer. Reading God's words didn't feel enlightening, and sometimes I'd get sleepy. I felt a real darkness in my spirit and couldn't feel the Holy Spirit's work. Before long, I saw other brothers and sisters being promoted, while I was still a lowly member of the watering team. I became even more discouraged. I'd been working so hard for so long, but was just turning in circles in the same old place. It seemed I had no hope of being promoted. Believers just like me were able to become supervisors and team leaders, and had others' admiration, but I never got promoted. Did it mean I was a failure as a believer? I got so negative that I couldn't muster up the motivation for anything.

Later, I wondered why I was feeling so down. Why did I only live for status? Had I only been after status all my years of faith? How could I be so pathetic? Why was I so obsessed with status? I really hated myself. I kneeled down before God in prayer and said, "God, I want to pursue the truth in my faith, repay Your love, and do the duty of a created being. But right now I'm tormented by my desire for status, leaving me down and depressed. I don't want to live this way, but I can't help myself. God, please enlighten and save me, so that I can understand my problem and resolve it."

After praying, I read this passage of God's words: **"An antichrist has an antichrist's disposition and essence, and this is what distinguishes them from a normal person. Though they say nothing on the outside after being replaced, in their heart they continue to resist. They make no admission of their mistakes, and they are never capable of truly knowing themselves. This has long since been proved. There is also something else about an antichrist that never changes: No matter where they do things, they want to stand out from the crowd, to be looked up to and admired by others; even if they don't have a legitimate post and title as a church leader or team leader, they still want to be head and shoulders above others in standing and status. Regardless of whether they can do the work, what sort of humanity or life experience they have, they will devise all sorts of means and go to great lengths to find chances to show off, to buy their way into people's hearts, to win others over, entice and deceive them, in order to gain their admiration. What about the antichrist is there to admire? Even though they have been dismissed, 'a lean camel is still bigger than a horse,' and they remain an eagle flying above chickens. Isn't this the arrogance and self-righteousness of the antichrist, and their exceptionalism? They cannot reconcile themselves to being without status, to being a regular believer, to being just an ordinary person. They cannot simply do their duty with their feet on the ground and stay in their place, do a good job in their own duty, devote themselves to it and do their best. These things come nowhere near satisfying them. They are unwilling to be that sort of person or to do those sorts of things. What is their grand ambition? It is to be admired and looked up to, and to hold power. So, even if they do not have a particular title attached to their name, an antichrist will strive for themselves, speak**

up for themselves and justify themselves, doing everything they can to put on a show, afraid that no one will notice them or pay them any attention. They will pounce on every opportunity to become better known, to increase their prestige, making more people see their gifts and strengths, see that they are superior to others. In doing these things, an antichrist is willing to pay any price it takes to flaunt and commend themselves, to make everyone think that, even if they are no longer a leader, and no longer have status, they are still superior to ordinary people. In this manner, an antichrist has achieved their goal. They aren't willing to be a regular person, an ordinary person; they want power and prestige, and to be exalted" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Twelve: They Want to Retreat When There Is No Status and No Hope of Gaining Blessings). Reading God's words, I felt like God was right there, exposing me. God says people like antichrists want name and status, to have power and others' admiration no matter what. To fulfill that wild ambition, antichrists will pay any price to be noticed, to exalt themselves, and win people over. I could see that my pursuit was exactly the same as an antichrist's. In my faith, I wanted to have status, to be a leader or a supervisor. I wanted to excel within my group, and be admired and supported by others. After I was dismissed, I didn't address my desire to be a supervisor. I actively participated in work discussions and offered suggestions, and I gave feedback to the supervisor as soon as I discovered problems, so she would know I could not only find issues, but also provide solutions, that I had a head on my shoulders. Then I'd be in line for a promotion. I worked hard in my duty, so that other brothers and sisters would see I could do practical work, then I'd have a shot at promotion. I was proactive in work even when it wasn't my primary responsibility, ready to spend lots of my time and energy, wanting everyone to see I shouldered a burden for my duty and

could take on a lot. I didn't slack in my pursuit of the truth, either, so they'd approve of me. I looked for every chance to prove myself and show off. Isn't that the sort of antichrist behavior that God exposes?

I read some of God's words that really thoroughly describe the corrupt essence of antichrists. Almighty God says: **"For antichrists, if their reputation or status is attacked or taken away, it is a matter even more serious than trying to take their life. No matter how many sermons they listen to or how many of God's words they read, they will not feel sadness or regret over never having practiced the truth and having taken the path of antichrists, nor over their possession of the nature essence of antichrists. Instead, they are always racking their brains for ways to gain status and increase their reputation. It can be said that everything antichrists do is done to show off in front of others, and is not done before God. Why do I say this? It is because such people are so in love with status that they treat it as their very life, as their lifelong goal. Moreover, because they love status so much, they never believe in the existence of truth, and it can even be said that they harbor absolutely no belief in God's existence. Thus, no matter how they calculate to gain reputation and status, and no matter how they try to use false appearances to trick people and God, in the depths of their hearts, they have no awareness or guilt, let alone any anxiety. In their consistent pursuit of reputation and status, they also brazenly deny what God has done. Why do I say that? In the depths of antichrists' hearts, they believe, 'All reputation and status are earned by people themselves. Only by gaining a firm foothold among people and gaining reputation and status can they enjoy God's blessings. Life only has value when people gain absolute power and status. Only this is living like a human. By contrast, it would be useless to live in such a way as to**

submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements in everything, to willingly stand in the position of a created being, and to live like a normal person as spoken of in the word of God—no one would look up to a person like that. A person's status, reputation, and happiness must be won through their own struggles; they must be fought for and seized with a positive and proactive attitude. No one else will give them to you—waiting around passively can only lead to failure.' ... Antichrists firmly believe in their hearts that only with reputation and status do they have dignity and are they true created beings, and that only with status will they be rewarded and crowned, qualify for God's approval, gain everything, and be a genuine person. What do antichrists see status as? They see it as the truth; they regard it as the highest goal to be pursued by people. Isn't that a problem? People who can obsess over status in this way are genuine antichrists. They are the same kind of people as Paul. They believe that pursuing the truth, seeking submission to God, and seeking honesty are all processes that lead one to the highest possible status; they are merely processes, not the goal and standard of being human, and that they are done entirely for God to see. This understanding is preposterous and ridiculous! Only the absurd ones who hate the truth could produce such a ridiculous idea"

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). Reading this passage of God's words was really poignant for me. It felt like what I was hiding in my heart had been brought into the light by God. I felt I had nowhere to hide. I started reflecting on myself, and the more I did, the more I felt like my thinking was just like an antichrist's. All my words and actions were centered around status, and everything I did was to gain admiration. Status was more important to me than anything. Before gaining faith, I always wanted to stand out from the crowd and I loved gaining others' support and

approval. After gaining faith, I kept going after leadership positions so I'd be looked up to and have an important role in the church. After I was dismissed, I didn't have any regret for my past transgressions and wasn't thinking about how to really repent and do my duty well to repay my debt to God. Instead, I used that opportunity to do a duty as a chance to show off. I threw myself into my duty and worked hard to regain a role of importance. When I didn't get that after some hard work, I became discouraged. I felt like no one noticed, no matter how much I put into my duty, no matter how well I did in it. I thought my efforts were meaningless. I lost my drive to do well in my duty when I didn't gain any status. I even misunderstood and blamed God, reasoning with Him and being resistant. I got carried away by thoughts of name and status. I'd lost the conscience and reason a created being should have. I wholeheartedly pursued status and I wasn't content to be a regular member of the team. I was evil and shameless just like an antichrist, totally unreasonable. These words from God really helped me: **"They believe that pursuing truth, seeking obedience to God, and seeking honesty are all processes that lead one to the highest possible status; they are merely processes, not the goal and standard of being human, and they are done entirely for God's sake."** This really felt like a slap in the face to me. Pursuing and practicing the truth is a positive thing, and it's our duty as people. We need to pursue truth in our lives, and live by God's words. However, I was using pursuit and practice of the truth as a bargaining chip for personal status. Having such a vile motive in my duty could never gain God's approval. God's words showed me how wrong my perspective on things was. I thought only by having status and power, being looked up to, well known, and admired could my life have value. Without status as a believer, being a regular follower was a pathetic way to live, and it was a failure. What a crazy outlook! God requires us to be

qualified created beings, to stay in our own place, to submit to God's rule and arrangements dutifully, to carry out the responsibilities of a created being. But I didn't want to stay in my place, but to be a great person doing important work, to have a lofty position and get more admiration that way. That's a satanic disposition. In fact, in watering work, no matter how great of a price I paid or what an important role I played, it was just the duty I should do. It was my responsibility, but I wanted to make a show of myself to gain a certain status. When my crazy ambitions weren't fulfilled, I lost interest in my duty. I mistook my ambition for devotion to God. That so-called devotion was dishonest and transactional. How was that practicing truth and doing a duty? It was trying to use and cheat God, and I was squarely on an antichrist path. God is righteous and holy and He sees into our hearts and minds. I was going headlong down the wrong path. How could I gain the Holy Spirit's work? My state was deteriorating and I was in darkness. This was God setting me aside and chastening me. That's when I saw how scary the pursuit of name and status really is. I didn't know myself, or whether I could do practical work. I just kept pursuing status, hoping for a promotion. I'd lost proper humanity and reason and had no self-awareness. I thought of a passage of God's words: **"You will all one day recognize that fame and gain are monstrous shackles that Satan uses to bind man. When that day comes, you will thoroughly resist Satan's control and thoroughly resist the shackles Satan uses to bind you. When the time comes that you wish to throw off all the things Satan has instilled in you, you will then make a clean break with Satan and you will truly loathe all that Satan has brought to you. Only then will mankind have a real love and yearning for God"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). God's words are so true. I was pursuing status nonstop, toyed with and tormented by Satan. I'd lost the Holy Spirit's

guidance and I was living in darkness. That desire of mine was really doing me in. I couldn't stop my tears from flowing and I hated how stubborn, how rigid I'd been. That whole time, I'd been pursuing name and status, on an antichrist's path. But God still used His words to warn and expose me so that I could see the problem in my pursuit and turn back. But I didn't get it. I misunderstood and blamed God, being negative and going against God. I was so unreasonable. I was overcome with guilt when I realized that, and I said this prayer, "God, I don't want to pursue name and status anymore, but to seek the truth to resolve my corruption, and truly repent. Please enlighten and guide me, show me the way."

I read another passage of God's words after that: **"When God requires that people fulfill their duty well, He is not asking them to complete a certain number of tasks or accomplish any great endeavors, nor to perform any great undertakings. What God wants is for people to be able to do all they can in a down-to-earth way, and live in accordance with His words. God does not need you to be great or noble, or bring about any miracles, nor does He want to see any pleasant surprises in you. He does not need such things. All God needs is for you to steadfastly practice according to His words. When you listen to God's words, do what you have understood, carry out what you have comprehended, remember well what you have heard, and then, when the time comes to practice, do so according to God's words. Let them become your life, your realities, and what you live out. Thus, God will be satisfied. You always seek greatness, nobility, and status; you always seek exaltation. How does God feel when He sees this? He loathes it, and He will distance Himself from you. The more you pursue things like greatness, nobility, and being superior to others, distinguished, outstanding, and noteworthy, the more disgusting God finds you. If you**

do not reflect upon yourself and repent, then God will despise you and forsake you. Avoid becoming someone whom God finds disgusting; be a person that God loves. So, how can one attain God's love? By accepting the truth obediently, standing in the position of a created being, acting by God's words with one's feet on the ground, properly performing one's duties, being an honest person, and living out a human likeness. This is enough, God will be satisfied. People must be sure not to hold ambition or entertain idle dreams, not to seek fame, gains, and status or to stand out from the crowd. Even more, they must not try to be a person of greatness or superhuman, superior among men and making others worship them. That is the desire of corrupt humanity, and it is the path of Satan; God does not save such people. If people incessantly pursue fame, gains, and status without repenting, then there is no cure for them, and only one outcome: to be cast out" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation). I saw from God's words that He doesn't want us to be famous, great, or lofty. He hopes we can be grounded and do our duty, and just submit to His arrangements. But I didn't faithfully do my duty. I wasn't content being a regular person. I only wanted a higher position and to be a cut above. I was so arrogant. God is the Creator, and He is so great and honorable. He has personally become flesh, coming to the earth to express the truth, but He never shows off. Instead, He very quietly carries out His work to save mankind. God is so humble and hidden, and incredibly lovely. I felt so ashamed when I thought about it that way, and I resolved that I absolutely had to forsake my flesh and practice the truth.

After that, I threw myself wholeheartedly into my duty and really thought about how to water new believers. I forgot about my status, but felt happy to be a regular person and do my duty as well as I could. Putting this

into practice was really grounding for me. When I put my heart into it, God enlightened me, giving me a path in my watering work. Before I knew it, I was doing better in my duty. I remember once when we had a gathering for new believers, the sister who was new to the watering team wasn't familiar with the new believers and didn't know how to approach them. I knew I should help out, but it occurred to me that doing the preparatory work of getting in touch with people was really lowbrow. Wouldn't it take me down a notch if I offered to do that? At that point I saw I was wrong, that duties don't vary in importance, and communication is also a duty. So why couldn't I do that? Then I offered to help with contacting brothers and sisters. When I did that, I realized that no matter the duty, as long as you can accept God's scrutiny, have the right intention, and do it with your heart, you'll feel at ease, at peace. Sometimes when brothers and sisters were asking about details of the watering work and the supervisor was too busy to answer their questions, I'd do everything I could to fellowship with them and resolve things. I wouldn't think about whether they'd look up to me or if it would improve my status, but just wanted to work well with everyone else and do my duty well. After I put aside my wild ambitions and practiced according to God's words, everything changed in my duty. I felt more responsibility and found more problems, and my state gradually improved. I also felt brighter and more at ease, and that conducting myself in this way was truly good. I understood that God's words really are the truth and that they are capable of changing and purifying people. Only conducting myself and doing things in accordance with God's word and the truth and obeying the arrangements of the Creator forms my life foundation as a created being. Henceforth, regardless of whether or not I have status, and no matter where God places me, I am willing to place myself at the mercy of God and honestly perform my duty as a created being.

I always used to relentlessly pursue name and status, which just left me tortured and exhausted. Without the judgment and revelations of God's words, I never would have seen how deeply Satan corrupted me or how much I cared about status. I would have kept fighting for those things, toyed with by Satan, without a human likeness. Through this, I've truly felt that God's judgment and chastisement is His best protection and salvation, and it's His love. Just as God says: **"In his life, if man wishes to be cleansed and achieve changes in his disposition, if he wishes to live out a life of meaning and fulfill his duty as a creature, then he must accept God's chastisement and judgment, and must not allow God's discipline and God's smiting to depart from him, in order that he may free himself from the manipulation and influence of Satan, and live in the light of God. Know that God's chastisement and judgment is the light, and the light of man's salvation, and that there is no better blessing, grace or protection for man"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment).

30. In Letting Go of Status, I Am Liberated

By Hao Li, China

In August 2019, I took on a leadership position in the church. One time, right after I'd wrapped up my fellowship in a gathering, a sister said to me, "Sister Hao Li, your fellowship today was really enlightening. Listening to it, my problem has been solved." Another sister chimed in and agreed with her. Seeing their looks of respect and admiration, I was thrilled, and couldn't help feeling smug: "I must be better than the other brothers and sisters. Otherwise, why would they have elected me?" Since I successfully addressed some problems in gatherings, the others liked being around me, and they'd seek me out for fellowship when they had problems or difficulties. I felt like I was well qualified as leader. I couldn't help but feel a little high and mighty, and I loved that sense of being esteemed and admired by others.

One day when I went to a deacons' gathering as usual, Sister Wu Zhiqing mentioned that she'd been living within her arrogant disposition lately and always wanted to have the final say among those who worked with her. She knew that being that way wasn't right, but she couldn't forsake herself. She asked us to share some fellowship to help her out. Just as I was about to start, Sister Han Jingyi, our gospel deacon, started talking, sharing some relevant words of God and some of her own experience. I noticed that Zhiqing was listening intently and nodding her head, with a smile on her face. The sight of this made me really uncomfortable, and I thought, "I'm the leader here, and this should be my problem to deal with. Why are you snatching it away from me? You've made it look like I don't know how to handle it. No way, I won't let you steal my thunder, otherwise everyone will think that as a leader, I'm not even a match for a deacon. I

need to change the topic right away.” So no sooner had Jingyi stopped speaking, without a second thought to whether Zhiqing’s problem had been satisfactorily addressed, I immediately said: “God’s main intention now is to spread and to testify the gospel of the kingdom, to let more people hear His voice and come before Him as soon as possible.” As I fellowshiped, I kept an eye on Zhiqing, and didn’t feel settled until I saw that she was listening to me attentively. As soon as I finished, Jingyi followed up with some relatively good approaches to take in sharing the gospel. What she was saying was very clear, and I noticed Zhiqing listening attentively to what she was saying, nodding her head while she did so. I felt really miffed, like it was an embarrassment for me. I thought, “I’m the leader, and you’re a deacon. How am I supposed to get my work done after you gain the upper hand this way? If everyone starts looking up to you, who will give me a second thought?” At this thought, I cut Jingyi off sternly, and started to share my own fellowship. It was a really awkward moment. That afternoon, Zhiqing mentioned that there was a lack of people working on watering, and she didn’t know how to solve the problem. Jingyi started fellowshiping on some practical approaches, integrating her own experience. Just then I saw Zhiqing once again nodding from time to time, and I felt really jealous. I thought, “I’m the leader. You think I don’t know how to fellowship with her? You seem to think you’re really capable, but you’re just blindly showing off.” I was very angry with Jingyi, thinking I’d better dig deeper into her work and cut her down to size, so she wouldn’t blindly show off. Thinking on this, I asked her, “Jingyi, the gospel work of the groups you’ve been managing hasn’t been very fruitful. Is it that you haven’t put your heart into it?” At this question, Jingyi looked a little awkward, then said, “Sister, I can accept that. After I’ve gone back I will sum up why it hasn’t been very successful, and reflect on myself.” I quickly followed up with,

“Then when you get back, you need to urgently summarize and reverse the deviation. As a gospel deacon, you have to take a leading role. Otherwise, how will the brothers and sisters be motivated to spread the gospel?” In response, Jingyi nodded her head a little stiffly. Seeing her quietly hanging her head, I felt a little remorse, but I was also smug: “How about those airs you were putting on just now, as if I were no match for you? As soon as I inquire into your work, you don’t look so great. Not so smug now, are you?” So I regained my presence, speaking with authority once again and making arrangements for other work. It was already dark by this point, and Zhiqing and I had other tasks to discuss that evening. I’d originally wanted Jingyi to stay and discuss things with us, but then I was worried she would take the spotlight from me again. Wouldn’t that make me look incapable? I figured I would just have her go home. When I saw her walking off with an unhappy look on her face, I did feel a little guilty and wondered if she was feeling constrained by me. But at the time I just gave it a passing thought and didn’t reflect any further. I just let it pass.

After a few more days passed, I mentioned the way I’d acted toward Jingyi to Sister Li Sixing, who worked alongside me. She dealt with me, saying, “This is an antichrist disposition. When you, as a leader, exclude and suppress someone who surpasses you, this is a problem of a very serious nature. Won’t the more talented members of the church be done in with you at the helm?” Hearing this was gutting for me, and very uncomfortable. Only then did I realize the gravity of the issue. I thought back over my interactions with Jingyi. I’d used her shortcomings to exclude her so that she wouldn’t come out ahead of me. Wasn’t I suppressing her? That was doing evil! The more I thought about my behavior, the more afraid I felt, and I came before God and prayed: “Oh God! Through Sixing dealing with me today, I’ve realized that by suppressing and excluding

Jingyi I was revealing an antichrist disposition. With such an important work, if I don't resolve this disposition, who knows how much evil I'll commit! Oh God! I want to change—please guide me.”

After that, I read this in God's words: **“Antichrists expropriate everything from the house of God and the property of the church, and treat them as their personal property, all of which is to be managed by them, without anyone else interfering. The only things they think about when doing the work of the church are their own interests, their own status, and their own pride. They do not allow anyone to harm their interests, much less do they allow anyone of caliber or anyone who is able to speak of their experiential testimony to threaten their status and prestige. And so, they try to undermine and exclude as competitors those who are able to offer experiential testimony, and who can fellowship the truth and provide for God's chosen ones, and they desperately try to isolate those people completely from everyone else, to drag their names thoroughly through the mud, and to bring them down. Only then will the antichrists feel at peace. If these people are never negative, and are able to carry on performing their duty, speaking of their testimony, and supporting others, then the antichrists will turn to their last resort, which is to find faults with them and condemn them, or to frame them and fabricate reasons to harass and punish them, until they get them thrown out of the church. Only then will the antichrists completely relax. This is what is most insidious and vicious about the antichrists. What causes them the most fear and anxiety is the people who pursue the truth and are possessed of true experiential testimony, because people with such testimony are the ones whom God's chosen ones approve of and support the most, rather than those who blather on emptily about the words and doctrines.**

Antichrists do not possess true experiential testimony, nor are they capable of practicing the truth; at best, they are capable of doing a few good deeds to curry favor with people. But no matter how many good deeds they do or how many nice-sounding things they say, these are still incomparable to the benefits and advantages that a good experiential testimony can bring to people. Nothing is a substitute for the effects of the provision and watering provided to God's chosen ones by those who are able to speak of their experiential testimony. And so, when antichrists see someone speaking of their experiential testimony, their gaze becomes a dagger. Rage ignites in their hearts, hatred rises up, and they are champing at the bit to shut the speaker up and stop them from saying any more. If they carry on talking, the antichrists' reputation will be completely ruined, their ugly faces completely exposed for all to see, so the antichrists find a pretext to disturb and suppress the person speaking testimony. Antichrists permit only themselves to deceive people with the words and doctrines; they do not allow God's chosen ones to glorify God by offering their experiential testimony, which indicates what kind of people the antichrists hate and fear the most. When someone distinguishes themselves with a little work, or when someone is able to offer true experiential testimony in order to benefit, edify, and support God's chosen ones, and earns great praise from everyone, envy and hate grows in the hearts of the antichrists, and they try to alienate and suppress them. They do not, under any circumstances, allow such people to undertake any work, in order to prevent them from threatening their status. People with the truth reality serve to accentuate and highlight the poverty, wretchedness, ugliness, and wickedness of the antichrists when they're in their presence, so when an antichrist chooses a partner or co-worker,

they never select people with the truth reality, they never select people who can speak of their experiential testimony, and they never select honest people or people who are able to practice the truth. These are the people the antichrists envy and hate the most, and they are a thorn in the side of the antichrists” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). I saw from God’s words that the main hallmark of an antichrist disposition is seeing power as their very life, always wanting a monopoly in their duty, and wanting to take charge. The moment someone surpasses them, threatens their status or power, they will exclude them and suppress them, even to the point of unscrupulously damaging the work of the church. Reflecting on myself since taking on a leadership position, I hadn’t been focused on what my responsibilities in my duty were and how I should do practical work, but on the prestige my status brought me. In order to protect my status, I hadn’t allowed anyone to outperform me. Jingyi’s fellowship on the truth resolved Zhiqing’s problem. That shows she assumed a burden, and that’s a positive thing, but I wasn’t happy that Zhiqing’s state had been resolved. Instead, I was afraid Jingyi would look better than me, and was anxious that I would lose my place in the others’ hearts, that they wouldn’t look up to me anymore. I deliberately changed the topic so as not to give Jingyi an opportunity to speak. When I saw her winning praise from others in her fellowship, I deliberately made things difficult for her by asking her about her work. I made her look bad and wouldn’t let it go until the others didn’t look up to her anymore. In order to consolidate my position, I’d actually used this evil, despicable tactic to suppress and exclude someone who was able to fellowship the truth. My nature was truly evil! Hadn’t I revealed the disposition of an antichrist? I thought of an antichrist the church had expelled just a few days before. He was constantly suppressing and

excluding brothers and sisters who expressed different opinions, or who were better than him, giving no thought to the work of the church. He ended up being expelled for doing all sorts of evil. With all that I had done to Jingyi, what difference was there between me and that antichrist? I was walking the path of the antichrist.

Later, I read this in God's words: **"No matter what you do, whether it be important or not, there should always be someone there to help you, to give you pointers, advice, or to do things in cooperation with you. This is the only way to ensure that you will do things more correctly, make fewer mistakes and be less likely to go astray—it is a good thing. Serving God, in particular, is a big deal, and not resolving your corrupt disposition could put you in danger! When people have satanic dispositions, they can rebel against and resist God in any time and at any place. People who live by satanic dispositions can deny, resist, and betray God at any time. The antichrists are very stupid, they don't realize this, they think, 'I had enough trouble getting hold of power, why would I share it with anyone else? Giving it to others means I won't have any for myself, doesn't it? How can I demonstrate my talents and abilities without power?' They do not know that what God has entrusted people with is not power or status, but a duty. Antichrists only accept power and status, they put their duties aside, and they don't do practical work. Instead, they only pursue fame, gain and status, and only want to seize power, control God's chosen people, and enjoy the benefits of status. Doing things this way is very dangerous—this is resisting God! Anyone who pursues fame, gain and status rather than properly performing their duty is playing with fire and playing with their life. Those who play with fire and their lives can doom themselves at any moment. Today, as a leader or a worker, you are**

serving God, which is no ordinary thing. You are not doing things for some person, much less working to pay bills and put food on the table; instead, you are performing your duty in the church. And given, in particular, that this duty came from God's entrustment, what does performing it imply? That you are accountable to God for your duty, whether you do it well or not; ultimately, an account must be given to God, there must be an outcome. What you have accepted is God's commission, a hallowed responsibility, so no matter how important or minor this responsibility is, it is a serious business. How serious is it? On a small scale it involves whether you can gain the truth in this lifetime and it involves how God views you. On a larger scale, it directly relates to your future and fate, to your end; if you commit evil and resist God, you will be condemned and punished. Everything you do when you perform your duty is recorded by God, and God has His own principles and standards for how it is scored and evaluated; God determines your end based on all that is manifested by you as you perform your duty" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). I learned from God's words that being a leader or worker is important work that can't be taken lightly. You can't be arrogant or willful. It requires a God-fearing heart and harmonious cooperation with other brothers and sisters. You need to seek the truth more and listen to others' suggestions so you're not likely to take the wrong path. God gives everyone a different caliber and each person has their own understanding. A single person has limited experience and can only see things from one perspective. Achieving good results in our duty requires everyone's cooperation, and that we make up for what each other lacks. Jingyi suggested some good approaches to practice that perfectly made up for what my fellowship was lacking. That was a good thing! But

my status was more important to me than anything, so I just wanted to show off and get others to look up to me, to worship me. Seeing Jingyi fellowship well, taking me out of the spotlight, I just excluded her and suppressed her. Wasn't I living by Satan's poisons like "In all the universe, only I reign supreme" and "There can only be one alpha male"? I didn't care if our gatherings were fruitful or if the brothers and sisters could find solutions to their states. I didn't even consider whether Jingyi felt constrained or hurt. I had single-mindedly pursued the satisfaction of my own ambitions and desires. How despicable I was! I was serving as a church leader but failing to bring the brothers and sisters before God. I wasn't helping the others gain knowledge of God, but I wanted to have them controlled within my grasp, to get them to look up to me and revolve around me. That was going against God, taking the path of an antichrist! If I didn't repent, I'd be sure to offend God's disposition and be cast out.

Thinking back over how I'd treated Jingyi, I saw how malicious my disposition was, how devoid of humanity I was. I felt sickened, and despised myself. I wanted to seek a path of practice to resolve my satanic disposition as soon as possible. I later watched a video of the reading of God's words. Almighty God says: **"There are principles to God's actions. His approach to humanity is one of cherishing, consideration, and love. God wants what's best for people—this is the source and original intention behind all of God's actions. On the other hand, Satan shows itself off, forces things upon people, gets them to worship it and be misled by it, and leads them to become degenerate, so that they gradually turn into living devils and head toward destruction. But when you believe in God, if you understand and gain the truth, then you can escape from the influence of Satan and attain salvation—you won't face the outcome of being destroyed. Satan can't stand to see**

people doing well, and it doesn't care whether people live or die; it only cares about itself, its own profit, and its own pleasure, and it lacks love, mercy, tolerance, and forgiveness. Satan doesn't possess these qualities; only God possesses these positive things. God has done a significant amount of work on humans, but has He ever spoken about it? Has He ever explained it? Has He ever declared it? No, He hasn't. No matter how people misunderstand God, He doesn't explain. ... God is humble and hidden, and Satan flaunts itself. Is there a difference? Showing off versus humility and hiddenness: which are positive things? (Humility and hiddenness.) Could Satan be described as humble? (No.) Why? Judging by its wicked nature essence, it is a worthless piece of trash; it would be abnormal for Satan to not flaunt itself. How could Satan be called 'humble'? 'Humility' is said of God. God's identity, essence, and disposition are lofty and honorable, but He never shows off. God is humble and hidden, so people do not see what He has done, but as He works in such obscurity, humankind is unceasingly provided for, nourished, and guided—and this is all arranged by God. Is it not hiddenness and humility, that God never declares these things, never mentions them? God is humble precisely because He is able to do these things but never mentions or declares them, and does not argue about them with people. What right have you to speak of humility when you are incapable of such things? You didn't do any of those things, yet insist on taking credit for them—this is called being shameless” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part Two)). This passage of God's words showed me how humble and hidden God is. God is the Creator, constantly doing His work, guiding mankind and providing us with everything we need to survive, but He never shows Himself off. He just quietly expresses the truth, working to save mankind.

God's essence is so lovely, so good! As for me, I wanted to show myself off everywhere I went. Once I'd taken on a leadership position, I put myself on a pedestal that I refused to come down from. When my sister fellowshipped on good approaches to practice, I didn't seek the truth with an open mind. I wouldn't let anyone outdo me. I was so arrogant! I was a leader, but I wasn't cultivating or recommending those who pursued the truth, instead I excluded and suppressed them. I thought only of how to protect my own status, make others look up to me and think highly of me. I truly knew no shame, and was of despicable character! I hastened before God in prayer: "Oh God! My antichrist disposition is extremely serious. I want to repent to You, to take my rightful place and do my duty with my feet on the ground." Then I went and met with every group, to fellowship with everyone on Jingyi's approaches to spreading the gospel. Following that, I laid bare and dissected my exposure of corruption in contending for status with her, as well as my antichrist disposition. Putting this into practice made me feel very calm and at peace.

After that, when I found myself in a state of contending with others over status, I would consciously practice the truth. I was in a gathering with a few group leaders one day, and Sister Yang Guang, who was pretty outgoing, seemed quite energetic from the start and was actively engaged in responding to others' questions. She was the focal point the entire time. At one point when we were talking about how to split up gatherings for new believers, Yang Guang made a different suggestion the moment I was done talking. Even though I felt that she was right, when I saw all the brothers and sisters agreeing with her and that everyone's gaze had shifted to her, I felt like I'd lost face. I thought, "Yang Guang has become the focal point, and I'm playing a supporting role. I'm the leader, but aren't I just like a prop?" As soon as this occurred to me, I realized I was vying for status

again, fighting to take center stage. I silently prayed to God, saying that I was willing to put myself aside and work well with Yang Guang, and that I needed His guidance to change my incorrect state. I recalled a passage of God's word: **"You must let go of leadership titles, let go of the filthy air of status, treat yourself as an ordinary person, stand on the same level as others, and have a responsible attitude toward your duty. If you always treat your duty as an official title and status, or as a kind of laurel, and imagine that others are there to serve your position, this is troublesome, and God will despise and be disgusted with you. If you believe that you are equal to others, you just have a little more of a commission and responsibility from God, if you can learn to put yourself on an even footing with them, and can even stoop to asking what other people think, and if you can earnestly, closely, and attentively listen to what they say, then you will work in harmony with others"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). This passage of God's words provided me with a path of practice. The church had given me the chance to serve as a leader, not to give me status, but to enable me to work harmoniously with everyone to perform the duty properly. I couldn't keep fretting over my reputation and status, or contend for name with others. Yang Guang's suggestion was right, so I should accept it. That would be best for the work of the church. Once she'd finished, I expressed my agreement and told the other brothers and sisters to proceed in accordance with her suggestion. I was no longer in competition with her in my heart. In that gathering, everyone openly shared their own opinions and it was a really productive meeting. I was so happy to see this, and really grateful for God's guidance. I realized that cooperating well with others, without being reined in by the strictures of status, is really very freeing.

It was through this experience that I saw how I'd been excluding and suppressing people to bolster my status. I saw how I'd been living according to a satanic disposition, able to do evil and resist God at any moment. Not pursuing the truth is incredibly dangerous! God's words of exposure, and the revelation of the facts, let me see clearly that I was on the wrong path and enabled me to change a little. I also truly felt that, so long as we wholeheartedly pursue the truth and work to resolve our corrupt dispositions, God will lead the way. Thank Almighty God!

31. The Shamelessness of Showing Off

By Xinping, China

One year ago, I transferred to another church. To begin with, I didn't really fit in, because I had been a leader at my original church, and my brothers and sisters thought very highly of me. Whenever they had problems, they came to me to resolve them. But at this church, the brothers and sisters weren't familiar with me. I felt like a nobody, which was very disappointing. I thought: "My results in preaching the gospel used to be quite good, so this time, if I can use my ability in preaching the gospel to show everyone that I have caliber and perform my duties more effectively than others, then I'll be able to stand out." I preached the gospel very actively during that time, and before long I converted more than a dozen people. I was overjoyed. When I saw my brothers and sisters, I couldn't help showing off my experience in preaching the gospel. They said enviously, "It's so easy for you to preach the gospel, but we can't. When we meet the potential gospel recipients who have notions and who won't listen, we don't know how to fellowship with them." The truth is that I also often encountered this situation. There were times when my preaching was unsuccessful, but I rarely talked about these problems and failures, or didn't mention them at all, because I was afraid that if everyone knew, they wouldn't see me as capable or think highly of me. I thought, "I have to talk about my successful experiences of preaching the gospel so that you can see how well I perform my duties." So I said, "Preaching the gospel isn't hard. When I meet potential gospel recipients, here's how I fellowship with them...." My brothers and sisters admired me very much when they heard that. After that, when anyone had friends or relatives who wanted to investigate God's work in the last days, others would say, "Have Xinping

go preach to them. You want Sister Xinping.” I was very happy when I saw that this was everyone’s attitude. Soon, a leader arranged for me to take charge of the watering work of several churches. This made me even more proud, and I thought I had an even bigger stage to show my talents. When my brothers and sisters had difficulties sharing the gospel or watering newcomers and pulled back, or became unwilling to suffer and pay a price, I encouraged them and talked about how I suffered in preaching the gospel. I said: “When I preached the gospel before, sometimes it was over ten degrees below zero in winter, and the wind cut my face like a knife, but all the same I went on preaching. In heavy rain, when water ran deep under the bridges and my shoes were wet, I squeezed the water out of my insoles, carried them in my pocket, and continued on my way to preaching. Once, in temperatures more than ten degrees below zero, I sought out a newcomer to have a gathering with her, and I waited outside for more than an hour before she came....” When my brothers and sisters heard this, they looked at me with approval and admired me for being able to suffer, and I was quite happy about that.

Later, I was given responsibility for more churches. I thought, “In just a few short months I’ve been promoted again. Won’t my brothers and sisters think even more highly of me?” During that period, I often prayed to God and strived to equip myself with aspects of the truth regarding watering newcomers. Gradually, I found a path forward in my duties. My brothers and sisters all felt listening to my fellowship was helpful for them. Without me realizing it, my ego started to swell again and I started to show off again at gatherings. When my brothers and sisters asked me how to fellowship on and resolve the religious notions brought up by newcomers, I thought, “I’ll talk to them properly about this so that everyone can see that I understand the truth and that I can solve problems.” Then I told them my

thoughts and experience in detail, and gradually, everyone looked at me differently. They listened attentively to whatever I said. The brothers and sisters looked up to me wherever I went, and even brothers and sisters who I didn't know also asked to hear my fellowship. Later, I took the common problems encountered in spreading the gospel and watering work, wrote out seventeen rules, and took them to gatherings and fellowshiped on them with the brothers and sisters. There was a sister whose husband was a village cadre and opposed her belief in God. He raised a lot of sharp questions and deliberately made things difficult for us, and he asked for my fellowship by name. I was very uneasy then, but by praying to God, I refuted each of his questions, and in the end, he had nothing to say. Afterward, I took the questions this sister's husband raised and included them in my frequently asked questions about spreading the gospel. Each time at gatherings, I brought it out and talked about it vividly, to let my brothers and sisters know I was capable and wise and that I could solve problems. Several times after gatherings, some brothers and sisters said, "Sister Xinping, can you stay one more day with us and give us more fellowship?" Seeing how everyone admired me, I was so overjoyed. To let my brothers and sisters know I was someone important and could suffer and pay a price in my duties, I even said, feigning to be casual, "I'm in charge of many churches, and I already have an appointment at another church. A lot of brothers and sisters are waiting for me. I'm so busy that I have no time to rest." When I spoke with my brothers and sisters, I would also deliberately say, "Each time I go to a gathering, it takes the whole day. I had a fracture in my waist before, and I really can't take sitting like this." A sister heard that and said with admiration, "You are really working hard, so you have to pay attention to your health!" Because I often showed off among the brothers and sisters

like this, they felt I was quite able to suffer and that I bore a burden in the performance of my duties.

During that period, I busied myself with gatherings and fellowship, but sometimes my heart was empty, and I didn't know what to fellowship on. But when I saw the expectation in the eyes of my brothers and sisters, I thought, "The brothers and sisters now feel that I fellowship on the truth clearly, and everyone looks up to me. If I tell them I don't know how to fellowship, won't the good image I set up in their hearts disappear?" So I pretended to be calm and asked them to fellowship first. I thought, "First, I'll listen to what everyone talks about, then I'll summarize what they said and share my own understanding. That will make it look like I've received the truth more comprehensively and lucidly." In this way, the brothers and sisters did feel that it was I who gave the thorough fellowship. I also deliberately said, "Because I have this duty, God has enlightened me differently." I said this in order to exalt myself and to show off. When I said this, the brothers and sisters looked up to me even more and became more dependent on me. During that time, no matter what problems they encountered in preaching the gospel or watering newcomers, the brothers and sisters didn't pray or seek anymore, but instead hoped that I could fellowship with them and solve their problems. At that time, I also thought how woe comes to those who admire, as well as to those who receive admiration, and I felt a little uneasy, but then I thought, "My fellowship is all about my understanding of God's word and pointing out some paths of practice for my brothers and sisters. All of it is so that our work can achieve results. There's nothing wrong with that." So those worries and anxiety merely flashed through my mind, and I didn't dwell on them. But just when I was filled with passion and enthusiasm to perform my duty, my psoriasis, which hadn't acted up for several years, suddenly relapsed. There were

large patches of it on my legs, arms, and even on my face. It was very itchy, and it made me so uncomfortable that my gatherings were impacted. It was even worse this time than before. I used various medicines, but nothing helped. I realized my condition wasn't an accident, and that there must be lessons to be learned from it. But at the time, I didn't realize what my problem was.

Later, I went to see a few brothers and sisters who preached the gospel, to fellowship and resolve their problems. I thought, "I'll have to do well with them to show them my ability to work." I was like a company executive presenting a report at a meeting. I fellowshipped with them about how to grasp key points of fellowship when preaching the gospel, and how to solve common problems in preaching the gospel. The brothers and sisters listened attentively. Some even constantly wrote down notes for fear of missing something I said, and the sister who hosted us also sat by the door, listened carefully, and gave me water from time to time. I really enjoyed seeing how much importance they attached to my fellowship. But at the same time, I was a little uneasy, "All of this is only my personal understanding, and mistakes are inevitable, so is it appropriate that everyone writes down what I say?" But then I thought, "Brothers and sisters might just want to record some good paths of practice, which helps in the fulfillment of their duties. There can't be anything wrong with that." Once I thought of it that way, I decided to let people take notes. At the gathering the next day, one sister came back and said, "I didn't write down Sister Xinping's fellowship yesterday, so I'll listen to it again today." Once the gathering had finished, I heard two sisters speaking to each other. One said, "Did you record it?" The other sister complained, "Why didn't you record it?" When I heard this, I felt afraid: "If everyone considers my words to be so important, aren't I bringing people before myself?" The more I thought,

the more scared I felt, so I went home and prayed to God, asking Him to enlighten me so that I could know myself.

I read two passages of God's word: **“Exalting and testifying to themselves, flaunting themselves, trying to make people think highly of them and worship them—corrupt mankind is capable of these things. This is how people instinctively react when they are governed by their satanic natures, and it is common to all of corrupt mankind. How do people usually exalt and testify to themselves? How do they achieve this aim of making people think highly of them and worship them? They testify to how much work they have done, how much they have suffered, how much they have expended themselves, and what price they have paid. They use these things as the capital by which they exalt themselves, which gives them a higher, firmer, more secure place in people's minds, so that more people esteem, admire, respect, and even venerate, idolize, and follow them. To achieve this aim, people do many things that testify to God on the surface, but essentially exalt and testify to themselves. Is acting that way reasonable? They are beyond the purview of rationality. These people have no shame: They unabashedly testify to what they have done for God and how much they have suffered for Him. They even flaunt their gifts, talents, experience, special skills, their clever techniques for conducting themselves, the means they use to toy with people, and so on. Their method of exalting and testifying to themselves is to flaunt themselves and belittle others. They also dissemble and camouflage themselves, hiding their weaknesses, shortcomings, and deficiencies from people so that they only ever see their brilliance. They do not even dare to tell other people when they feel negative; they lack the courage to open up and fellowship with them, and when they do something wrong, they do their**

utmost to conceal it and cover it up. Never do they mention the harm they have caused to the work of the church in the course of doing their duty. When they have made some minor contribution or achieved some small success, however, they are quick to show it off. They cannot wait to let the whole world know how capable they are, how high their caliber is, how exceptional they are, and how much better they are than normal people. Is this not a way of exalting and testifying to themselves?” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Four: They Exalt and Testify About Themselves). **“Everyone who walks the path of the antichrists exalts and bears testimony for themselves, promotes themselves and shows themselves off at every turn, and doesn’t care about God at all. Have you experienced these things that I’m talking about? Many people persistently testify for themselves, talking about how they suffer this and that, how they work, how God values them, and entrusts to them some such work, and what they are like, deliberately using particular tones while speaking, and affecting certain manners, until eventually some people will probably begin to think that they are God. The Holy Spirit has long since abandoned those who reach this degree, and while they have not yet been cleared out or expelled, and are left instead to render service, their fate is already sealed and they are just awaiting their punishment”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. People Make Too Many Demands of God). God’s word precisely revealed my state. I often exalted myself and showed off like this. When I first started at this church, I felt like I was unknown and insignificant, so I thought of preaching the gospel as a chance for the brothers and sisters to look up to me and praise me. To show everyone my ability to work and make them look at me with new eyes, I didn’t talk about my own experiences of failure. Instead, I talked a lot about how I preached the gospel, how many people I converted,

and how I solved difficult problems, to give people an illusion and make them think I understood the truth and could solve their problems. As I was promoted, I wanted more people to think highly of me and have a place for me in their hearts, so I always told my brothers and sisters how busy I was and what suffering I endured. But I kept my lips sealed on my own weakness and corruption, to make people think I really pursued the truth, paid a price and bore burdens in my duties. Wasn't this deceiving my brothers and sisters? The great red dragon constantly preaches its "great, glorious, and correct" image to make others admire and follow it, but in every way, it covers up the evil things it does in secret as a means to deceive the world's people. What was the difference between what I was doing and the great red dragon? God gave me gifts and talents for spreading the gospel, so that I could do my part to expand the gospel's reach and bring more people before God so they could gain His salvation. But I used these gifts and talents as capital to show off and display myself everywhere and enjoyed the respect and worship of my brothers and sisters for me. I was so shameless! Because I constantly exalted myself and showed off, they all admired me and didn't pray to God and seek the truth when they had problems, but instead sought to fellowship with me and surrounded me. I was resisting God! When I thought about this, I was very afraid. I knelt before God and cried as I prayed, "God, I exalted myself and showed off to make others worship me. I walked the path of resisting You. I wish to repent."

After that, I reflected on myself. Why, when I clearly knew that the light in my fellowship was the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, did I still involuntarily show off and display myself? I read in God's word: **"Some people particularly idolize Paul. They like to go out and give speeches and do work, they like to attend gatherings and preach, and they like to**

have people listen to them, worship them, and revolve around them. They like to hold a place in the hearts of others, and they appreciate it when others value the image they present. Let us analyze their nature from these behaviors. What is their nature? If they really behave like this, then it is sufficient in showing that they are arrogant and conceited. They do not worship God at all; they seek higher status and wish to have authority over others, to possess them, and to hold a position in their hearts. This is the classic image of Satan. The aspects of their nature that stand out are arrogance and conceit, an unwillingness to worship God, and a desire to be worshiped by others. Such behaviors can give you a very clear view into their nature” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man’s Nature). **“Once people have grown arrogant in nature and essence, they can often disobey and resist God, not heed His words, generate notions about Him, do things that betray Him, and things that exalt and bear testimony to themselves. You say you are not arrogant, but suppose you were given a church and allowed to lead it; suppose that I did not deal with you, and that no one in God’s family criticized or helped you: After leading it a while, you would bring people to your feet and make them submit before you, even to the point of admiring and revering you. And why would you do that? This would be determined by your nature; it would be none other than a natural revelation. You do not have any need to learn this from others, nor is there any need for them to teach it to you. You do not need others to instruct you or compel you to do this; this kind of situation comes about naturally. Everything you do is about making people exalt you, praise you, worship you, submit to you, and listen to you in all things. Allowing you to be a leader naturally brings about this situation, and it cannot be changed. And**

how does this situation come about? It is determined by man's arrogant nature. The manifestation of arrogance is rebellion and resistance against God. When people are arrogant, self-important, and self-righteous, they tend to set up their own independent kingdoms and do things in whatever way they want. They also bring others into their own hands and draw them into their embraces. For people to be capable of doing such arrogant things, it just proves that the essence of their arrogant nature is that of Satan; it is that of the archangel. When their arrogance and self-importance reach a certain level, they no longer have a place for God in their hearts, and God is put aside. They then wish to be God, make people obey them, and they become the archangel. If you possess such a satanic arrogant nature, God will have no place in your heart. Even if you believe in God, God will no longer recognize you, will view you as an evildoer, and will cast you out" (The

Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. An Arrogant Nature Is at the Root of Man's Resistance to God). I saw from God's words that my nature was very arrogant and conceited. Just like Paul, I enjoyed being worshiped and admired. At first, I just wanted to perform my duty well, but I was controlled by my arrogant and conceited nature, so I involuntarily showed off and put myself on display. Although I knew my words contained my personal intentions and purposes, I could never control my own ambitions and desires. I always wanted to be admired and praised. As a child, I was spoiled with attention by my family, and when I grew up, I went into business and became a well-known female entrepreneur in our local area. At home and at work, I always had the final say. Wherever I went, I heard the praise and appreciation of others, and I enjoyed the feeling of being the brightest star in the sky and commanding the respect of everyone. After believing in God, I was never satisfied with being ordinary and unknown in the church. I always looked

for opportunities to make others admire and look up to me. Paul's nature was especially arrogant, and he always wanted others to worship and think highly of him, so he showed off how much work he did and how much suffering he endured everywhere he went. He never testified to Christ in his letters. Instead, he exalted himself under the banner of supporting the church, and later, he shamelessly testified that he lived as Christ. This led to the believers worshiping him, exalting him, using him as a benchmark, and even regarding his words as God's words—even to the point that today, 2,000 years later, many religious believers cling to Paul's words and therefore refuse to accept God's work of the last days. Paul brought people before him, which offended God's disposition, and he was punished by God. I was also arrogant and conceited, and lived by satanic ideas and perspectives like "Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards" and "Stand out above the rest." I always wanted to be above others, show off, and put my talent on display. This caused my brothers and sisters to listen only to me when things happened, accept whatever I said, think of ways to make up when they didn't take full notes of my fellowship, and even record me; they viewed my words as more important than God's. Even then, I didn't know to reflect on myself. Instead, I immersed myself in the pleasure of being admired. I was so arrogant and so shameless! I had no knowledge of my own identity. I didn't understand that I was a created being, a human who was corrupted by Satan. I shamelessly put myself on a high pedestal. I wanted others to have a place for me in their hearts, to listen to me, and to support me. And because I kept showing off, my brothers and sisters did have a place for me in their hearts. The more they admired me, the farther from God they moved. I thought of the first administrative decree of the Age of Kingdom: **"Man should not magnify himself, nor exalt himself. He should worship and exalt God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of

God. The Ten Administrative Decrees That Must Be Obeyed by God's Chosen People in the Age of Kingdom). People were created by God, so we should worship God and regard Him as above all, but I made people admire me, and regard me as above all. Wasn't I violating this administrative decree? At that moment, I felt very afraid. I realized the serious nature of showing off to make others worship and think highly of me. If I continued like this, I would definitely go to hell and be punished, like Paul! Suffering this sickness today was discipline from God. He was warning me through the sickness that I had gone astray. This was God's salvation for me!

Later, I recalled a passage of God's word: **"Although God says He is the Creator and that man is His creation, which may sound like there is a slight difference in rank, the reality is that everything God has done for mankind far exceeds a relationship of this nature. God loves mankind, cares for mankind, and shows concern for mankind, as well as constantly and unceasingly providing for mankind. He never feels in His heart that this is additional work or something that deserves a lot of credit. Nor does He feel that saving humanity, supplying them, and granting them everything, is making a huge contribution to mankind. He simply provides for mankind quietly and silently, in His own way and through His own essence and what He has and is. No matter how much provision and how much help mankind receives from Him, God never thinks about or tries to take credit. This is determined by the essence of God, and is also precisely a true expression of God's disposition"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself I). God is the Creator, and to save people from the bondage of Satan, God became incarnate to work among people, and endured people's condemnation and slander. God sacrificed everything for humankind, yet He never showed off. Even as He interacted with people, He never flaunted

His identity as God. He just quietly supplied us with truth and life. I saw that God's essence is beautiful and good, and that He is humble and hidden, without any arrogance or pride. Meanwhile, I was a person corrupted by Satan who was devoid of any truth. Yet I was incredibly arrogant. When I achieved the slightest thing in my duty I showed it off, flaunted it everywhere I went, so that I could win people's admiration and appreciation. I was too shameless, and too disgusting and vile in God's eyes. I went before God and prayed to Him, "God, I no longer wish to show off. I wish to repent. I ask that You guide me and show me a path to resolve my corrupt disposition."

I read two passages of God's word: **"What way of acting is not exalting and testifying to oneself? In the same matter, if you want to show off and testify to yourself, what you say will make some people think highly of you and venerate you. But if you are open and candid with your self-knowledge, the nature of what you say is different. Is this not true? Anyone with normal humanity should have the ability to be open and candid with their self-knowledge. This is something positive. If you really know yourself and speak about your state accurately, genuinely, and precisely; if you speak with an understanding that completely conforms to God's words; if those who listen to you are edified and benefit; and if you testify to God's work and glorify Him, that is testifying to God. If you speak openly and candidly, citing your many attributes and talking a lot about how you have suffered, paid the price, and stood firm in your witness, with the result that people have a high opinion of you and venerate you, then this is testifying to yourself. Here, one needs the ability to tell the difference between the two kinds of testimony. For example, explaining how weak and negative you were when facing trials, but how, after praying and seeking the truth, you**

finally understood God's will, gained faith, and were able to stand firm in your witness, is to exalt and testify to God. Such practice is absolutely not flaunting yourself and testifying to yourself. Therefore, whether or not you are flaunting yourself and testifying to yourself chiefly depends on whether you have truly experienced what you say, and whether the effect of testimony to God can be achieved; so, too, is it necessary to look at what your intentions and aims are when you speak of your experiential testimony. All these things make it easy to tell the difference. If you have the right intention when you testify, even if people have a high opinion of you and venerate you, it is not really a problem. If you have the wrong intention, even if no one has a high opinion of you or venerates you, that is a problem—and if people have a high opinion of you and venerate you, that is even more of a problem. Therefore, one cannot depend solely on the results to determine whether a person is exalting and testifying to themselves. Intention is the most important thing, and the right way to make the distinction is based on intent. If you make that distinction based on the results, it is easy to treat good people unjustly. Some people are especially genuine when testifying, and some others have a high opinion of them and venerate them. Can you say those people who testified were testifying to themselves? No, you cannot. Those people who testified are not a problem. The testimony they bear and the duty they perform benefit other people, and only the ignorant who have a distorted understanding venerate people. The key to distinguishing whether people are exalting and testifying to themselves or not is the intention of the speaker. If your intention is to show everyone how your corruption was evidenced, how you have changed, and is to allow others to benefit from this, then your words are earnest and true, and in line with the

facts. Such intentions are right, and you are not flaunting yourself or testifying to yourself. If your intention is to show everyone that you have real experiences, and that you have changed and possessed the truth reality, and thus earn their admiration and veneration, then these intentions are false. That is flaunting yourself and testifying to yourself. If the experiential testimony you speak of is false, if it is emended, and designed to mislead people, to stop them from seeing the true state of you, to prevent your intentions, corruption, weakness, or negativity from being revealed to others, then such words are deceitful and duplicitous; this is false testimony, this is deceiving God, it brings shame upon God, and it is what God despises most of all. There are clear differences between these states, which are differentiated based on intention” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Four: They Exalt and Testify About Themselves). **“When bearing testimony for God, you should mainly talk about how God judges and chastises people, and what trials He uses to refine people and change their dispositions. You should also talk about how much corruption has been revealed in your experience, how much you have suffered, how many things you did to resist God, and how you were eventually conquered by God. Talk about how much real knowledge of God’s work you have, and how you should bear witness for God and repay Him for His love. You should put substance into this kind of language, while putting it in a simple manner. Do not talk about empty theories. Speak more down-to-earth; speak from the heart. This is how you should experience things. Do not equip yourselves with profound-seeming, empty theories in an effort to show off; doing so makes you appear quite arrogant and senseless. You should speak more about real things from your actual experience, and speak more from the heart; this is most beneficial to others, and most appropriate for**

them to see” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). I understood from God’s words that if I wanted to stop exalting and testifying to myself, I would need to live frequently in God’s presence, possess a pious heart that fears God, open up my heart in front of my brothers and sisters, consciously disclose and dissect my own corruption, and talk about my real experiences. When I wanted to exalt and testify to myself, I would have to forsake myself and set my intentions right. I would have to expose and dissect my corruption and rebellion more often, and fellowship on my knowledge of God after experiencing His judgment, chastisement, trials, and refinement, and on what knowledge I had of my own corrupt disposition and corrupt essence. I should speak more from the heart so that my brothers and sisters could see my genuine side. Once I had a path of practice, at gatherings with my brothers and sisters I laid bare the entirety of my exposed corruption and my understanding of myself during this period, and told them that the little bit of light in my fellowship came entirely from the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and not from my real stature. Without God’s guidance, I couldn’t do anything. The brothers and sisters also realized that it was wrong for them to worship and look up to me, and said they wouldn’t look up to people anymore in the future. They said they would pray to God and seek the truth principles when they had problems, to get the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Later, when I was at meetings and ran into problems I didn’t understand, I could let go of my ego and openly seek in fellowship with my brothers and sisters. Everyone fellowshiped on what they had received and understood, some of which I had not yet received, which was very helpful for me. My brothers and sisters no longer worshiped me as they had previously, and when they discovered problems with me, they were able to point them out directly. When I had the desire of exalting

myself and showing off again, I prayed to God, accepted God's inspection, and at the same time I opened up to my brothers and sisters, let them know my corruption and my shortcomings, and accepted their supervision. I felt secure and at ease when I practiced this way, and I also tasted the sweetness of practicing the truth. Once I realized my arrogant nature and the wrong path I had taken, and once I had repented to God, my psoriasis gradually disappeared, and bit by bit, I recovered.

After experiencing God's discipline and chastening, I saw that God's righteous disposition is so vivid and real, and I saw God's real love. Everything God does is to save me from the bond of my corrupt satanic disposition. It was God's discipline and chastening that stopped my evil actions in their tracks and pulled me back from the brink of danger. Thank God!

32. A Catholic Priest's Choice

By Wei Mo, China

My parents raised me in the Catholic Church and I became a priest when I grew up. Later, the church became bleaker and bleaker. Bishops and priests were engaged in constant infighting and power struggles, and friars and nuns were always jealous and bickering with each other. One of our suffragan bishops got upset because his consecration hadn't been carried out by the diocesan bishop, so he gathered the other priests together and told them that since the diocesan bishop squandered the church's money on cars and property development, and joined the Three-Self Church, he should be removed from his post. They even had a physical altercation with parishioners that supported the diocesan bishop. Instances of jealousy and hatefulness became more and more serious thereafter, and the church began to splinter into factions. I was really disgusted to see them fighting for status that way. It wasn't like a church at all—it was just as dark as the secular world. The diocesan bishop started excluding me because I didn't want to join Three-Self. He assigned a priest to act as my assistant, and to vie for my position. After that priest came, he instigated parishioners to ostracize me, and before long my church was divided into two factions, and squabbles and struggles began to occur. I didn't want any part of those things, so I submitted my resignation to the bishop. I left that church filled with hate and conflict and joined another one in the remote mountains, along with several friars and nuns.

I thought its members would be simple and unpretentious, that there wouldn't be so many power struggles, and that perhaps the situation would be better there. But surprisingly, things were just as bleak. The parishioners' faith was tepid—they didn't even follow the commandments, and sinned

wantonly. They lied and cheated, and squabbled endlessly. Unbelievers were constantly coming in, lodging complaints about them with me. These were problems I couldn't resolve. Although I prayed to God regularly, I couldn't feel the presence of the Holy Spirit, and felt no enlightenment in the words of the Bible. In sermons, I had nothing new to say. I felt spiritually parched—it was as if the Holy Spirit had abandoned me.

Just as I was feeling lost and helpless, sunk in misery, Priest Liu and Deacon Zhang bore witness to me on Almighty God's work of the last days, telling me the Lord Jesus has returned. I was shocked and deeply stirred when I heard that. I was dying to know more about the return of the Lord Jesus, and I asked those two brothers to speak further. They shared lots of fellowship with me and read some of Almighty God's words, including a passage that left a deep impression on me. Almighty God says: **"After the work of Jehovah, Jesus became flesh to do His work amongst man. His work was not carried out in isolation, but was built upon the work of Jehovah. It was work for a new age that God did after He had concluded the Age of Law. Similarly, after the work of Jesus ended, God went on with His work for the next age, because the entire management of God is always progressing forward. When the old age passes, it will be replaced by a new age, and once the old work has been completed, there will be new work to continue God's management. This incarnation is God's second incarnation, which follows upon Jesus' work. Of course, this incarnation does not occur independently; it is the third stage of work after the Age of Law and the Age of Grace. Every time God initiates a new stage of work, there must always be a new beginning and it must always bring a new age. So too are there corresponding changes in the disposition of God, in the manner of His working, in the location of His work, and in His name. No wonder,**

then, that it is difficult for man to accept the work of God in the new age. But regardless of how He is opposed by man, God is always doing His work, and is always leading the whole of mankind forward. When Jesus came into the world of man, He ushered in the Age of Grace and ended the Age of Law. During the last days, God once more became flesh, and with this incarnation He ended the Age of Grace and ushered in the Age of Kingdom. All those who are able to accept the second incarnation of God will be led into the Age of Kingdom, and will moreover become able to personally accept the guidance of God. Though Jesus did much work among man, He only completed the redemption of all mankind and became man's sin offering; He did not rid man of all his corrupt disposition. Fully saving man from the influence of Satan not only required Jesus to become the sin offering and bear the sins of man, but it also required God to do even greater work to rid man completely of his satanically corrupted disposition. And so, now that man has been forgiven of his sins, God has returned to the flesh to lead man into the new age, and begun the work of chastisement and judgment. This work has brought man into a higher realm. All those who submit under His dominion shall enjoy higher truth and receive greater blessings. They shall truly live in the light, and they shall gain the truth, the way, and the life'' (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). After reading God's words, they shared a lot more fellowship with me. I learned that God's work is constantly moving forward—that the Lord Jesus did the work of redemption and faith in Him only obtains forgiveness from sin. Our sinful natures aren't resolved that way, however, so we live in a cycle of sinning by day and confessing by night, still bound by sin. To fully save people from sin and Satan's domain, God needs to do another stage of work, expressing truths to judge and

cleansed us. That's how to really resolve our corrupt disposition and sinful nature so we can escape sin, be cleansed, and enter into God's kingdom. The religious world lost the Holy Spirit's work a long time ago. To gain the Holy Spirit's guidance and the sustenance of the truth, we have to accept God's work of the last days, and keep up with His footsteps. That's the only way to grow in life. I read **The Word Appears in the Flesh** a lot after that—my heart was drawn to God's words. I couldn't get enough of it, staying up until 2 a.m. or so every night reading it. After some time, I became certain that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned, and I happily accepted God's work of the last days. So I brought the brothers and sisters who shared Almighty God's gospel into my church to testify God's work of the last days to those parishioners who were true believers, and in the end they all accepted it. We gathered and read Almighty God's words together in the church and found new illumination and enlightenment every single day. It felt so nurturing and enjoyable. We were attending the Lamb's wedding feast!

Before long, the bishops and priests began to disturb and obstruct me. First it was Bishop Zhao, who said, "I heard you've joined Eastern Lightning. You didn't discuss something so important with me, and took lots of parishioners with you. That's a betrayal of the Lord! When He returns He's sure to reveal it to us bishops first. How could I not know if He'd really come back? Give it up and come back! I know you're in a remote area and life is hard. If you come back, I'll help you out with anything you need." He also said lots of things blaspheming and condemning Almighty God. I found what he said inconceivable. He'd told me plenty of times that the Lord would be returning soon, so we had to lead parishioners to pray and be watchful to welcome the Lord, but now that the Lord had come back, he had no intention of seeking, and was even

blasphemous and condemning. He wasn't any kind of true believer. I kept on spreading the gospel, unaffected by him.

Then Bishop Wang came with someone else and said to me, all smiles, "Bishop Zhao asked me to convince you to go see him at the Bishop's House. He's incredibly concerned for your welfare, afraid you're taking the wrong path." I was so annoyed to hear him say that. They paid no heed to parishioners who felt negative and weak, but now they wouldn't stop pestering me about my faith in Almighty God. This was an attempt to keep me from accepting God's work of the last days. I told him, "You all are absolutely set on keeping me from my faith. The churches have been desolate, without the Holy Spirit's work for years. Brothers' and sisters' faith is cooling and they're in a cycle of sinning and confessing. They've been confessing, but they're unable to cast off the shackles of sin. I'd really been in pain. I learned from Almighty God's words that our faith in the Lord just brings forgiveness of sins, but not purification. If our sinful natures aren't resolved, we'll never escape the bonds of sin. The Lord has returned in the last days, expressing truths and doing judgment work to resolve the root of mankind's sinfulness, so we can be freed from sin. Almighty God's words have shown me the way to being purified and fully saved. Having looked into it, I have no doubts that Almighty God is the Lord returned. I won't give up my faith in Almighty God no matter what you say." Bishop Wang said, "It's true that the church is lacking the Holy Spirit's work and the Lord's presence, but that's temporary—the Lord is testing us. As long as we stay strong until the end, we'll see a great revival of the church. If you take everyone away into Eastern Lightning, the church will be empty, and how could we have a revival? The Lord is about to return, but He hasn't yet. You really think He wouldn't reveal it to the Pope when He returns? Since the Pope and bishops haven't heard about the

Lord's return, there's no question that this news is false. If you believe in Almighty God without the approval of the Pope or bishops, isn't that apostasy?" In fact, when I was looking into Almighty God's work, I also asked the same thing, but after seeking and fellowship I understood. When Bishop Wang said that the Lord would reveal His return to the Pope and bishops first, this had no foundation. The Lord Jesus never said that, and it isn't recorded in the Bible. To welcome His return, we have to go by the Lord's own words. The Lord said: **"Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock. If any man shall hear My voice, and open to Me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me"** (Revelation 3:20). **"I have yet many things to say to you: but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth"** (John 16:12–13). The Lord's words are perfectly clear. He'll speak more words and tell us the truth when He comes, and only if we hear His voice and accept the truths He expresses can we welcome the Lord. The Lord Jesus said: **"My sheep hear My voice: and I know them, and they follow Me"** (John 10:27). Apostles like Peter and Matthew who followed the Lord listened to what He preached to begin with, and only then realized that He was the Messiah they'd been waiting for. The Lord decides if we're part of His flock based on whether we hear His voice. That's why the key to investigating the true way is listening for the Lord's voice and using that to recognize and accept Him. This is what's most reliable. It says in Revelation many times: **"He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"** (Revelation Chapters 2, 3). The Lord won't reveal it to religious leaders and bishops first when He comes in the last days—He will speak directly to the churches, letting His voice be heard. Almighty God has expressed so many truths, unveiling so many mysteries of the Bible, telling us of His management plan for our salvation, and giving us the path

to being saved and entering the kingdom. This fulfills something the Lord Jesus said: **“When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, He shall speak; and the things that are to come, He shall show you”** (John 16:13). Those who recognize the voice of God from His words and follow Him are His sheep, and they’re the only ones who can welcome the Lord. So I rebutted Bishop Wang, saying, “You claim that the Pope and bishops should know first about the Lord’s return, but is this based on the Lord’s word? The Lord Jesus never said anything like that, and neither did God the Father or the Holy Spirit. Nothing like that is recorded in the Bible. So isn’t what you’re saying just a human notion and imagining? To welcome the Lord, we have to follow the Lord’s own words, not our notions and imaginings. It’s recorded in the Old Testament that the boy Samuel served Yahweh in Eli’s presence. By human imagining, Yahweh’s revelation should have been given to Eli first, but that was not what Yahweh did. He called the child Samuel four times to tell him His will. And when the Lord Jesus came, instead of it being revealed to the Jewish priests and scribes, an angel appeared to the shepherds and told them about the Lord Jesus’ birth. Obviously the Lord doesn’t work according to man’s notions. No matter how long someone’s been a believer or what their status is, as long as they’re willing to let go of their notions, humbly seek, and focus on listening for God’s voice, they can witness God’s appearance. The Lord has come in the last days, expressing truths and doing the work of judgment. He doesn’t need to solicit anyone’s opinion or give revelation to any particular person. This is God’s own work that no man can interfere with. Anyone who disobeys or rebels will only offend God’s disposition, just like the scribes and the Pharisees, who clung to notions and condemned the Lord Jesus, having Him nailed to the cross. They committed a heinous

sin and were damned and punished by God. Isn't that bitter lesson something we can reflect on?" He replied really angrily, "You have some gall, daring to go against the Pope! You know, Priest Liu was kicked out of the church after joining Eastern Lightning. Church members rejected him and even his family were against it. He gave up his priesthood, and turned down a car and money. Don't you think that's abnormal?" I thought then that the Catholic Church really didn't have the Holy Spirit's work, and all the bishops could speak of was money, status, and pleasure, just like an unbeliever. How was that serving God? No matter how they tried to disturb me and stand in my way, I was determined to follow Almighty God. I said, "The Bible says, 'We ought to obey God, rather than men' (Acts 5:29). I only obey God's words, not men's. You can perish that thought and stop advising me." He left in a huff when he saw I wouldn't listen to him.

After that, Bishop Zhao and Bishop Wang kept coming to try to disturb me and stand in my way. They said, "Priest Wei, you can't be unconscionable! Back then, to help you become a priest, we and other priests risked imprisonment to protect you, paying quite a price to help you with your 10 years of training to deliver sermons. We've been giving you food and drink. Your parents worked so hard so you could get your priesthood sooner, but now you've gone against them with your belief in Eastern Lightning. Can you still face us? Can you still face your parents? Give up this faith and come back to us. We're waiting for you." My mind was in turmoil when they were saying those things. I was thinking of all those years the bishops took care of me—they really did a lot. The police had been after me in those years and the bishops arranged things really thoughtfully for me, to ensure my safety. My family was poor and the bishops had looked after me. I was afraid it would be unconscionable of me if I didn't listen to them. But I knew that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus

returned, and I couldn't turn my back on Him. So I said a prayer: "Oh God, I'm feeling weak. Please give me faith and strength so I'm not swayed by outside influences." I opened up **The Word Appears in the Flesh** after that and saw this passage: **"From the moment you come crying into this world, you begin to fulfill your duty. For God's plan and for His ordination, you perform your role and start your life's journey. Whatever your background, and whatever the journey ahead of you, no one can escape the orchestrations and arrangements of Heaven, and no one is in control of their own destiny, for only He who rules over all things is capable of such work. Since the day man came into existence, God has ever worked thus, managing the universe, directing the rules of change for all things and the trajectory of their movement. Like all things, man is quietly and unknowingly nourished by the sweetness and rain and dew from God; like all things, man unknowingly lives beneath the orchestration of God's hand"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man's Life). I also remembered that the Lord Jesus said: **"Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you of much more value than they?"** (Matthew 6:26). God takes care of the birds in the air—just think of humans! I was made by God, and He gave me my life. My food, my clothing, has all been given to me by God. The bishops caring for me was God's arrangement, and my chance to serve God as a priest was also arranged and determined by Him—it was His love. It should have been God who I was thanking. If I betrayed God to repay a person's so-called kindness, that would really be unconscionable! I thought again of all these bishops and priests who were jealous and power-hungry, and greedy for the benefits of status. The Lord has returned, and not only did they refuse to seek or look into it, but they kept others from welcoming the Lord, even

spreading lies and blasphemy. Weren't they perpetrating evil in everything they did? No matter how nice they seemed, they weren't trying to bring people before the Lord, to help them know the Lord and gain the truth and life from Him. It was to bring people before themselves, to have them adulate and follow them, which pushed people farther and farther from the Lord. It reminded me of the Lord exposing the Pharisees: **“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men, for you yourselves do not enter in; and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you devour the houses of widows, praying long prayers. For this you shall receive the greater judgment”** (Matthew 23:13–14). The bishops and priests had everyone firmly under their power, and stopped people from welcoming the Lord's return. How was that any different from the scribes and Pharisees? Weren't they the evil servants that God's work of the last days exposes? Having a conscience for them would be a real betrayal of the Lord.

Later on, clergy from other provinces also learned that I had accepted Almighty God's work in the last days. Bishops and priests of several parishes besieged me. They were full of blame, attacks, and condemnation, saying my belief in Eastern Lightning was a betrayal of the Lord, that I was a traitor and should be damned. The worst part was that they made things up and twisted the facts to slander and blacken The Church of Almighty God and to blaspheme Almighty God. Hardly anyone would just calmly hear me out. I was incensed—how could these people, ostensibly working for God, be this way? Everything out of their mouths was condemnation and blasphemy, so hateful toward God! For a while, it felt like something was tightly gripping my heart, and I couldn't find any peace. I knew, with them condemning and rejecting me that way, that their parishioners were

certain to treat me the same. No matter where I went, I'd probably be drowning in their slander and rumors. This was really painful and disappointing for me. Then I remembered what the Lord said: **"Blessed are you when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake"** (Matthew 5:11). God became flesh and came to earth to save mankind, suffering the religious world's condemnation and renouncement, but still He expressed truths to save us. What was this suffering of mine, compared to that? It is worth a little suffering to follow God and receive the truth and life. Thinking of it that way, I was no longer worried about other people's judgment or condemnation. They may renounce and condemn me, but I had welcomed the Lord, read His words, and received His watering and provision. This was the greatest blessing. This was really comforting and brought me a sense of peace. In my old church, I wasn't spiritually sustained, and was living in darkness. But following Almighty God, I was getting the sustenance of the truth and could see salvation on the horizon. It was like coming back from the dead. I'd found the way of eternal life, and no matter how the Catholic clergy condemned and obstructed me, I'd follow Almighty God. I read this passage of God's words after that: **"In every step of work that God does within people, externally it appears to be interactions between people, as if born of human arrangements or from human disturbance. But behind the scenes, every step of work, and everything that happens, is a wager made by Satan before God, and requires people to stand firm in their testimony to God. Take when Job was tried, for example: Behind the scenes, Satan was making a bet with God, and what happened to Job was the deeds of men and the disturbance of men. Behind every step of work that God does in you is Satan's wager with God—behind it all is a battle"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). From God's words I understood that outwardly I was being attacked and suppressed by bishops and priests. Behind that, however, it was Satan disturbing me and testing me. Through the bishops and priests, Satan was using money, power, and prestige to tempt me to betray God. When they didn't get what they wanted, they lashed out at me—they wanted to force me to give up my faith in Almighty God and lose His salvation. I couldn't fall for Satan's tricks. The more the clergy judged and attacked me, the more I saw the truth of how they resisted God and hated the truth. Not a single one of them sought or longed for God's appearance. They were arrogant and unable to accept the truth. All of them were modern-day Pharisees working against God.

One early morning, twenty days later, just as day was breaking, I was at the church in prayer with some friars, nuns, and parishioners who had just accepted Almighty God. Just then, Priests Wang and Li showed up with the deacons, and some parishioners who usually weren't devout—probably 70 or so people all burst into the church courtyard. They had these really menacing looks on their face, and I figured they were resorting to violence to keep brothers and sisters from investigating the true way. I was quite afraid and quickly prayed to God, "God! My stature is small, please give me faith and strength so I don't bow to these antichrist religious forces." I felt soothed after my prayer, not so afraid. I very calmly approached them and said, "Priest Wang, Priest Li, why have you brought all these people here?" Priest Wang pointed at me and said, "You've accepted Eastern Lightning, and worse, you've gotten parishioners involved! Welcoming the Lord's return is a big deal, but you went over to Eastern Lightning in secret without discussing it with us. You're rebelling! Have you forgotten the Lord's own words? The Bible says: **'Then if any man shall say to you: Lo here is Christ, or there, do not believe him. For there shall arise false**

Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect' (Matthew 24:23–24). Any news of the Lord's second incarnation is false. You've been misled and you've betrayed the Lord, and you're getting one last chance. Give up Eastern Lightning and bring the others back into the fold, and you'll remain a priest." I said very firmly, "Priest Wang, you can do whatever you want to me, but keeping us from investigating the true way, from hearing God's voice and welcoming the Lord's return is absolutely unacceptable. It's true there are false Christs and false prophets misleading people in the last days, but the Lord said He would definitely return. We can't fail to welcome the Lord's own return out of fear of being deceived by false Christs. Isn't that like giving up eating for fear of choking? The Lord Jesus told us to be on our guard against false Christs because they can't express the truth, but will just mislead people with signs and wonders. Only Christ in the flesh can express the truth, bestow humanity with life, and point us onto the path of salvation, into God's kingdom. Christ is God's Spirit in fleshly form and He possesses divine essence, so only He can express the truth to sustain and shepherd humans, only He can express God's disposition and complete the work to redeem and save man. No human can do that, and no human can imitate that. Almighty God has appeared and is working in the last days, unveiling the mysteries of God's 6,000-year management plan and the incarnations, expressing all truths required to purify and save mankind. Only God Himself could do all this work. Who else, aside from God, could express the truth? Who else could do the work of judgment in the last days? Who else could purify and fully save mankind? Not a single person. Almighty God expressing so many truths fully proves that He is the Lord Jesus returned, that He is Christ of the last days." Priest Wang, his eyes wide, pointed at me and said, "We don't care how right you are! Since you

don't want to turn back, and are dead set on Eastern Lightning, the bishops have told us to warn you—you must immediately stop spreading Eastern Lightning, and hand over their books.” Then Priest Li said, “Hand over the church keys, and that Eastern Lightning preacher too!” Just then, Priest Wang ordered the parishioners, “Search the place, and find all their Eastern Lightning books! They can't practice their faith without those books.” Then he ordered a few of them to hold me in place. One of the deacons flung himself on his knees before me and shouted, “You can't believe in Almighty God! What will we do if you're not our priest anymore? You have to guide us to heaven....” I couldn't get away from them. All I could do was watch helplessly while the others rushed into the church courtyard with their shovels and hoes, then I heard the sounds of windows and doors breaking. I was really angry and concerned—Brother Chen Guang, who shared the gospel, was inside. It would be a problem if they got their hands on him. The parishioners there were new to Almighty God's work of the last days and didn't have a good foundation. I was afraid they might not have the strength to stand strong with that kind of disruption. Before long, practically every room in the church had been turned upside down by them. They'd even turned over the tabernacle. They hadn't found books of God's words, and weren't ready to quit. They broke into church members' homes, intimidating and threatening them and spreading rumors, taking books of God's words from most of them. Chen Guang was beaten so badly he couldn't get off the floor; the priests even said they were going to take him to the police. I was furious, and told them, “Chen Guang is a true believer. Beating him so badly and even threatening to take him to the police—do you even have a conscience? Are you believers in God? God is righteous, and those who do evil and resist Him will certainly meet with retribution.” The priests and deacons didn't turn him into the police after I said that.

Then Priest Wang said to me, “The bishops and priests have only the best of intentions, I hope you understand that. Come back to the Bishop’s House with us.” I told him, “I’m not going with you. I’ve heard the voice of God and I’m following the Lamb’s footsteps. I’m set on this path!” They left exasperated after that.

That night, I just lay in bed, unable to sleep. The events of the day played in my head like a movie. My mind was in turmoil. I wondered how bishops and priests, lifelong servants of the Lord, could hate us investigating the true way so much. A church is a place of worship, but they actually had the nerve to tear it apart, beat up a brother sharing the gospel, and take books of God’s words from the believers. They were capable of any kind of evil! The priests had government connections, so there was no telling when they might report me to the police. I’d always refused to join the official church, and the Political Security Section chief had always seen me as a thorn in his side. He’d threatened me before, saying that me not joining the Three-Self Church had gotten him criticized by the Provincial Public Security Department and Municipal Public Security Bureau, and that he was going to show me what’s what when he got the chance. Now, as a believer in Almighty God, if the police got their hands on me, they might even torture me to death. Being renounced and condemned by the religious world and being pursued by the Party were really painful for me. I was just following the Lord’s footsteps, following Christ of the last days. Why was that so hard? I couldn’t sleep at all that night. I prayed to God, “God, please help me and give me faith and strength so I can overcome my fleshly weakness and stand firm through this situation.” Then I thought of a hymn of God’s words that I’d learned:

1 Almighty God, the Head of all things, wields His kingly power from His throne. He rules over the universe and all things, and He is in

the act of guiding us on the whole earth. We shall at every moment be close to Him, and come before Him in quietness, never missing a single moment, and with lessons for us to learn at all times. Everything, from the surrounding environment to people, affairs, and things, all exist by permission of His throne. Do not on any account let grievances arise in your heart, or God will not bestow His grace upon you.

.....

4 Faith is like a single log bridge: Those who cling abjectly to life will have difficulty in crossing it, but those who are ready to sacrifice themselves can pass over, sure of foot and worry-free. If man harbors timid and fearful thoughts, it is because Satan has fooled them, afraid that we will cross the bridge of faith to enter into God. ...

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning,
Chapter 6

Humming this hymn over and over gave me some inner strength. It's true—everything in the universe is in God's hands, including my fate, so whether I would be arrested or not was also up to God. Satan knew my weaknesses, using fame, status, and the threat of arrest to attack me and have me betray Almighty God. God was using the situation to perfect my faith, and to see if I had the resolve to give up everything to keep following Him. I suffered from their coercion, but I could feel God's guidance, and my faith in Him grew. I remembered that the Lord said: **“For he that will save his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it”** (Matthew 16:25). In order to redeem mankind, the Lord Jesus was crucified by the religious world and the government. The disciples who followed Him were all persecuted. They were stoned to death, dragged to their death by horses, or hanged. They were martyred for spreading the gospel, providing beautiful testimony, and met with God's approval.

Following God is taking the way of the cross. The Lord Jesus has already served as a model for us—we should drink from that bitter cup that He drank from, and walk the path that He walked. Now that I was following Almighty God, even if it meant I'd be arrested and tortured by the Communist Party, it would be suffering persecution for the sake of righteousness. It would meet with God's approval, and be glorious. No matter what I might face after that, I was ready to give my life for it, to follow God till the very end.

Later I thought about why the bishops and priests did not seek or look into God's gospel of the last days whatsoever, and were so resistant to it. I read this in Almighty God's words: **“Do you wish to know the root of why the Pharisees opposed Jesus? Do you wish to know the essence of the Pharisees? They were full of fantasies about the Messiah. What is more, they believed only that the Messiah would come, yet did not pursue the life truth. And so, even today they still await the Messiah, for they have no knowledge of the way of life, and do not know what the way of truth is. How, say you, could such foolish, stubborn and ignorant people gain God's blessing? How could they behold the Messiah? They opposed Jesus because they did not know the direction of the Holy Spirit's work, because they did not know the way of truth spoken by Jesus, and, furthermore, because they did not understand the Messiah. And since they had never seen the Messiah and had never been in the company of the Messiah, they made the mistake of clinging to the mere name of the Messiah while opposing the essence of the Messiah by any means possible. These Pharisees in essence were stubborn, arrogant, and did not obey the truth. The principle of their belief in God was: No matter how profound Your preaching, no matter how high Your authority, You are not Christ unless You are called the**

Messiah. Is this belief not preposterous and ridiculous?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew). Reading God’s words, I learned that the Pharisees opposed the Lord Jesus because they were stubborn, arrogant, and hated the truth. They heard the Lord Jesus’ words, but wouldn’t acknowledge that He spoke the truth. They saw that the Lord Jesus allowed the blind to see, healed lepers, and brought the dead back to life, showing so many signs and wonders, but wouldn’t acknowledge that He was the prophesied Messiah, God Himself. They were convinced that the Lord Jesus was just a man, and even blasphemed Him, saying He cast out demons through the prince of demons. They didn’t recognize the Holy Spirit’s work, accept the truth, or obey God’s words. They clung to the name “Messiah” and insisted on their own notions and imaginings, and ultimately had the Lord Jesus nailed to the cross. Now the Lord has returned as Almighty God, expressing truths to judge and cleanse mankind, and openly displaying God’s righteous and majestic disposition that brooks no offense. Almighty God’s words are powerful and authoritative, and have shaken the hearts of true believers in God from every denomination. They all acknowledge that Almighty God’s words are the truth, and that they are the Holy Spirit’s words to the churches. But the bishops and priests cling to the literal scripture and their own notions and imaginings, arrogantly waiting for the Lord to return and give them a revelation first. They don’t seek the truth or try to listen for God’s voice at all, but just madly keep people from accepting God’s work of the last days. All these things they do reveal their true faces of hating the truth and hating God. They are modern-day Pharisees, through and through.

After they vandalized the church, I left along with a few friars and nuns who wanted to share the gospel. A few days later, a brother got a

message to me telling me not to come back no matter what—the day after I'd left, the police had gone to the church to arrest me. When they hadn't found me, they'd camped out in the church, waiting for me. They arrested several people who'd just accepted the gospel, and demanded to know where I was. That brother said the captain of the National Security Brigade had a joint report on me from deacons of several parishes, saying I hadn't joined the Three-Self Church and that I'd called on other deacons and priests not to join either, so I was directly opposing the government. That captain said preaching Eastern Lightning is a crime punishable by death, and they could shoot to kill. The police threatened the brothers and sisters, saying they could be convicted of a crime if they didn't divulge my whereabouts. I was incredibly angry when I heard the news. The Party had been harassing me nonstop for years, pressuring me to join Three-Self. Now that I was following Almighty God and sharing the gospel of the last days, I'd become a real thorn in its side. They wanted to arrest me and see me dead right away. Those Communist Party demons are vile! I knew in my heart that without the permission of the bishops and priests, the deacons would never have reported me by themselves. Doing that showed their sinister and vicious nature even more clearly. I thought of the Pharisees—to keep Jewish believers from accepting the Lord Jesus' salvation, they had worked with the Roman government to have the Lord savagely nailed to the cross, and hounded and persecuted His disciples. Now the clergy were working with the satanic Communist Party regime to chase me down and force me to turn against Almighty God. They were no different from the Pharisees back then.

Not long after the deacons' report, my hosts' home was being watched by the police, so my brothers and sisters snuck me out right away. The next day, I learned that the host couple had been arrested. The police had shown

them a photo of me and demanded to know where I was. After that I had to stay constantly on the move to avoid arrest. I was always in hiding trying to escape the Communist Party, and wondering when those days would finally end. During the Cultural Revolution, my uncle was beaten to death for being a Catholic, and his body was left with marks from chains and scars from being branded. That's still engraved in my mind. I was afraid—if I fell into the Party's hands, how would they torture me?

Then I heard a hymn of God's words:

You Should Forsake All for the Truth

1 You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do. You must not throw away the truth for the sake of a peaceful family life, and you must not lose your life's dignity and integrity for the sake of momentary enjoyment.

2 You should pursue all that is beautiful and good, and you should pursue a path in life that is more meaningful. ...

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment

While I sang, I thought about the meaning of the hymn. Doing so gave me a better understanding of God's will, and my faith grew. In China, this nation that resists God, following God and gaining the truth requires some suffering. Only through hardship and trials is our faith perfected, and do we gain discernment over many things. I was rejected and sold out by the religious world because I was following Christ of the last days, Almighty God, and now I was being chased by the great red dragon, always on the run. I was on tenterhooks every day, and was really suffering. But those

experiences helped me more clearly see the reality that the clergy hate the truth, and hate God. I also truly experienced God's guidance. Whenever I was miserable and weak, God guided me to understand His will, strengthening me and giving me faith, so that I was no longer weak and afraid. I could feel God guiding me and watching over me. Although there was quite a bit of misery, it had meaning and value. Even if I did end up arrested, I knew it would be with God's permission, and I was ready to submit to His orchestrations and arrangements. I was ready to follow God no matter how difficult things got!

Even though I'd left the church, the clergy kept trying everything to keep me from spreading the gospel. One day I went to meet someone at the bus station, and just as I reached the exit, several people suddenly crowded around me and grabbed hold of me. I was really shocked and didn't know what was happening. Then, some of my family and relatives got out of a car and stuffed me into it without any explanation. I found out later that the bishops had asked a deacon to call my family and some parishioners and tell them I'd joined Eastern Lightning, that I'd lost my mind through injecting and consuming psychoactive drugs, that I didn't want to be a priest and didn't even care about money. They said I was being controlled and that I'd gone against my vows to the Lord—that I'd married a widow, and that my kids were such and such years old. They asked my family and relatives to work with the bishops to get me back, to stop me from following Almighty God and sharing the gospel. My family really adored the clergy and totally believed the things they were saying, so they listened to the bishops and came to get me. Listening to those rumors made me furious, and I saw even more clearly that the clergy are demons in the flesh. It's said in the Bible: **“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and he**

stood not in the truth; because truth is not in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof” (John 8:44). Only demons would so wantonly lie and spread rumors, bearing false witness to deceive people.

Then my family forcefully took me to the Bishop’s House. Bishop Zhao was all smiles, taking me in a false embrace: “You’re back—the lost sheep is home.” Then he told everyone else to leave so he could talk to me alone. He said, “Before, you wanted to go to university for further study, but we didn’t agree. This time we’ll agree to all of your requests and you can go to whichever university you want. Lots of divinity schools are short on instructors and many parishes are lacking priests. If you don’t want to attend university, you could be an instructor in a divinity school or choose which parish you’d like to serve as a priest in. You’re not getting any younger, and you’ve had a hard time in recent years. We have money, a car and a house ready for you. You won’t even need to worry about your pension. Just give up Eastern Lightning to be a priest, and you’ll have no worries.” I was really repulsed to hear him say this. All those bishops thought about was status, money, and fame. They believed in the Lord but didn’t follow His words. They didn’t seek or look into the news that the Lord had returned at all—in order to protect their own status and fame, they madly kept others from accepting God’s gospel of the last days. Could their status and fame really save them from sin? So I said to Bishop Zhao, “Bishop, I don’t want any of that. When Satan tempted the Lord Jesus, it used money and fame to try to get Him to bow before it. So who do these things you’re saying really come from? When you consecrated me as a priest, we swore to the Lord to take up a cross and follow Him for life. Now the Lord has returned and I’m determined to follow Him. Even if the Pope turns everyone against me, and makes them reject me, it won’t stop me!”

When Bishop Zhao saw he couldn't lure me away, he warned me, "You'd better stop telling church members about Eastern Lightning!" I didn't give him a response. Then he took me out to eat, and some of my relatives were there. One of them said to me, "You're the only priest in our family for generations, and you're the pride of our family. We never imagined you'd join Eastern Lightning. Your father's in his 80s now and you're out preaching Eastern Lightning instead of taking care of your parents. You've even given up your priesthood. This is a betrayal of the Lord and you'll go to hell for it!" Then my brother chimed in, "I suffered a lot so you could become a priest! When you were in divinity school, we hardly had anything to eat, and I was scrambling to get you food and money. It wasn't easy to get you your priesthood. But now you're with Eastern Lightning—you've betrayed the Lord. You're not a priest and don't care about money. Have you lost your mind?" I responded, "It's true that I needed your support to become a priest, but what about you saying I won't go home to take care of our parents? When gaining priesthood, I swore to the Lord to give up my home, family, and the chance of marriage to serve Him for life. It's said in the Bible: **'He that loves father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loves son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me. And he that takes not up his cross, and follows Me, is not worthy of Me'** (Matthew 10:37–38). You say I should give up sharing the gospel and go home to be filial, but is that in line with the Lord's words? Our faith means taking up a cross and sharing the gospel, taking it to every family and home. Now the Lord has returned and is doing the work of judgment beginning with God's house, so sharing this gospel is a very righteous thing. I am not betraying the Lord, but following His footsteps...." Before I could finish, my brother reached out like he was going to hit me, saying I'd shamed generations of our family and that he'd break my legs if I kept

sharing the gospel. He also said some blasphemous things. After that, Bishop Zhao kept me there and wouldn't let me leave, saying I needed medical attention. If I left I'd be followed—I felt just like a criminal, without any freedom. Fortunately, on the fourth day, I relied on God and escaped when they weren't paying attention, returning to the brothers and sisters to continue sharing the gospel.

I saw the clergy not only keeping people from hearing God's voice and welcoming the Lord, but also resorting to all sorts of tactics to deceive believers and lead them onto a path against God, making them their sacrificial objects. That my family was working against God and blaspheming Him was entirely the consequences of the bishops' lies, condemnations, and attacks on God. I remembered when the Lord cursed the Pharisees, He said: **“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men, for you yourselves do not enter in; and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter. ... Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you go round about the sea and the land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, you make him the child of hell twofold more than yourselves”** (Matthew 23:13–15). The bishops and priests also got people to join the religion, then had everyone listen to them, oppose God, and make them children of hell. They were demons devouring people's souls! Almighty God says: **“There are those who read the Bible in grand churches and recite it all day long, yet not one among them understands the purpose of God's work. Not one among them is able to know God; still less can any one among them accord with God's will. They are all worthless, vile people, each standing on high to lecture God. They willfully oppose God even as they carry His banner. Claiming faith in God, still they eat the flesh and drink the blood of man. All such people are devils that devour the**

soul of man, head demons that deliberately disturb those trying to step onto the right path, and stumbling blocks impeding those who seek God. They may appear of ‘sound constitution,’ but how are their followers to know that they are none other than antichrists who lead people to stand against God? How are their followers to know that they are living devils dedicated to the devouring of human souls?” (The Word,

Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. All People Who Do Not Know God Are People Who Oppose God). God’s words showed me what sort of people those religious leaders really are. They’re always boasting about their authority to forgive sins. When believers sin, they have to kneel before the clergy and confess to receive absolution. The clergy take the position of God and work to deceive people, making people worship them, follow them, and treat them like God. Having been deceived to this extent, people become unwilling to hear God’s voice and to follow Him. The clergy have become like God in the parishioners’ eyes. Now that the Lord has returned and is expressing truths to save mankind, they won’t seek or investigate, nor will they allow believers to accept it. Instead, they spread lies, judging, condemning, and maligning The Church of Almighty God. They don’t love God or the truth, only status and money, and they crave the benefits of status. To protect their position and their living, they keep believers firmly within their grasp, devouring people’s souls while claiming to serve God. They are bona fide demons, antichrists hiding in the church who hate the truth and are enemies of God. Undergoing the religious leaders’ temptations and disturbances time after time, I clearly saw that they have an anti-God, antichrist essence. It was Almighty God’s words that developed my discernment, and gave me faith and strength so I could overcome their temptations and attacks, see the essence of these antichrists in the religious world, be freed from their

strictures, and follow God. I've personally experienced that Almighty God's words are the truth and life. I'm so grateful for God's salvation!

33. A Story of Reporting a False Leader

By Kaleb, South Korea

In 2010, I was frequently in touch with one of the church leaders, Lucia. She often told us, “The last few years, God has always been gracious to me. My leaders always transfer me to churches that are having difficulties. Sometimes I don’t want to go, but I know this is God’s commission, so I can’t consider my fleshly interests. I have to be loyal to God, so I accept. At every church I go to, I do my rounds, host a couple of gatherings, and a church that was in chaos returns to normal, and church life and gospel work are effective again. Sometimes I encounter difficulties, but I pray to God, God opens a way forward, and everything goes smoothly. I see how wonderful God’s work is....” Hearing Lucia’s experience made me admire her. I thought she was able to bear burdens and was a capable leader. One time, before a gathering, I was casually chatting, and Lucia interrupted me to say, “Time here is precious, so let’s not chat while we are together. Let’s use this time to fellowship on God’s word.” Hearing her say that, I thought, “Over the years, I’ve met many leaders, but Lucia is the first one I’ve met who is so conscientious, so pious, and so dedicated to pursuing the truth.” I looked up to and admired her even more. But after interacting with her for a long time, I realized that although her fellowship was always well-reasoned, and she outwardly appeared like someone who pursues the truth, she very rarely gave fellowship on how she reflected on and came to know herself based on God’s word, or her practical experience of God’s word. Most of her fellowship was a disguised form of exalting herself and showing off to make others think she was someone cultivated and placed in important roles by the church, so that others would look up to her. But more serious than that was the fact that in some key matters involving the

interests of the church, she didn't practice the truth, and with her eyes wide open, she lied, deceived, and dodged responsibility. For example, Finn, who was responsible for Lucia's work, committed misdeeds in the church. He embezzled and appropriated the church's money, then was defined as an antichrist and expelled. Lucia was very aware of Finn's wicked deeds, and she actually took part in them. But after Finn was expelled, not only did Lucia not reflect on herself or repent to God, she also did not admit to having any part in Finn's wickedness. She portrayed herself as entirely clean of the matter, as if she didn't know anything about it and hadn't been involved in it. At that moment, I discovered Lucia was a hypocrite. Because Lucia was skilled at disguising herself and deceiving with lofty words, some brothers and sisters who had no discernment bore an expression of admiration at the mention of her name. When my partnered brother and I saw Lucia's behavior and the consequences of her work and sermons, we applied the principles of discerning false leaders, determined that Lucia was a false leader, and wrote a letter reporting these matters about Lucia.

After we sent the letter, we waited for the upper leaders to verify and understand Lucia's matter, but after half a month, we still hadn't received a reply. My partnered brother and I wondered about this. One day, Lucia happily came to a gathering with us and said the upper leaders intended to cultivate her. I couldn't believe it: "Rather than being dismissed, this false leader is being cultivated and placed in important roles? Did we incorrectly report her because we didn't understand the truth principles and lacked discernment?" Just over a month later, Lucia came again to say the church was planning an election for leaders, and that a majority of the brothers and sisters had a positive appraisal of her and intended to reelect her. When I heard that, I was stunned. I thought, "Lucia is sly and cunning. She isn't fit to be a leader at all. I should write another letter to report her." But as I was

getting ready to write the letter, I hesitated. “Right now, so many people lack discernment of Lucia. They have all been deceived by her false outward appearance. If I write a letter to report her again, and the upper leaders don’t understand the real situation, will they think that I just can’t let the matter go? Beyond that, if Lucia finds out I was the one who wrote the letter, will she harbor a grudge against me and surreptitiously try to sabotage me? She is responsible for issuing us with the books of God’s word, sermons, and fellowship from God’s house, so if I offend her, she won’t need to actively suppress me in any way; simply ignoring me, not providing me with books, will be enough to put me in dire straits.” Thinking of those things made me feel very conflicted. Should I report her again, or forget the matter? As I considered my own interests, future, and fate, it felt as if there was an invisible dark influence binding and constraining me. I struggled for a bit, and to protect myself from being suppressed, I eventually decided to compromise. I decided to put aside reporting her for the moment. I found consolation by telling myself, “At least now we have discernment of Lucia, and will no longer be deceived by her, so this will do for now. Perhaps one day, God will expose her, and everyone will gain discernment regarding her and see her for what she is. She will be replaced as a matter of course.”

Over a month later, we received a letter from two sisters. Their letter said they had discerned Lucia was a false leader and wanted to report her, and they asked our opinions and whether we had any advice. I thought, “We haven’t received a reply letter since the last time we reported Lucia. If we report her again with these sisters, will the upper leaders say we have formed a clique to attack Lucia, and are disturbing church work? If that happens, it is very likely that, rather than Lucia being dismissed, it will be us.” With this in mind, my partnered brother and I replied to the two sisters

with a letter saying, “You can report her on your own. We reported her once in the past, so this time, we won’t report her again.” After we replied, I felt very remorseful. I realized I was playing tricks to protect myself. It was compromising with and yielding to a dark influence. To spare myself from this internal condemnation, I used the same reasons as before to comfort myself: “For now, too many people lack discernment of Lucia. If we insist on reporting her and advocating for her dismissal, the brothers and sisters won’t allow it. They will try to protect her. We should wait until the brothers and sisters have discernment of her. When the time is right, she will naturally be replaced.” Even though that was what I thought, every time I saw passages of God’s word on exposing false leaders and antichrists, I felt condemned by my conscience. I had clearly found a false leader, and yet I wasn’t reporting her or bringing her to light. Wasn’t I tolerating Satan as it disrupted and disturbed church work? The brothers and sisters who hosted us all adored Lucia, and when we exposed her behaviors as a false leader, they did not try to discern her, instead they resented and blamed us, thinking we were attacking Lucia. I saw that this false leader had deceived people so deeply. I didn’t know how many brothers and sisters were victims of this deception, and I felt even more that false leaders are a hindrance and stumbling block to the life entry of God’s chosen people. At that moment, I wanted nothing more than Lucia to be replaced as soon as possible, but I didn’t have the courage to write the letter to report her again. Even simply to avoid offending the brothers and sisters who were hosting us, I didn’t dare expose Lucia’s behavior again. In my heart, I condemned and accused myself. I wondered how I could be so cowardly and useless. I saw a false leader disturbing the work of the church and didn’t dare report it. I didn’t even dare speak the truth. Wasn’t I just Satan’s lackey? I thought of God’s words: **“All of you say you are**

considerate of God's burden and will defend the testimony of the church, but who among you has really been considerate of God's burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for His burden? Can you practice righteousness for Him? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan's deeds? Would you be able to set your emotions aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you allow My intentions to be fulfilled in you? Have you offered up your heart in the most crucial of moments? Are you someone who does My will? Ask yourself these questions, and think about them often" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). Every one of God's questions made me feel embarrassed and ashamed. Normally, I was good at yelling out slogans, saying I would be considerate of God's will and would stand firm in my testimony to God, and I often prayed, saying I wanted to practice the truth and satisfy God. But the moment something happened and I needed to stand up and protect the interests of the church, I pulled my head back into my shell. I clearly knew that false leaders had to be reported immediately, but because I was afraid of being suppressed and dismissed, I didn't dare to report Lucia again, and allowed her to continue harming and deceiving our brothers and sisters. Even worse was the fact that when I saw the brothers and sisters who hosted me deceived by Lucia, I didn't think of how to help them gain discernment of the false leader. Instead, I made compromises. For fear that exposing Lucia would make them unhappy and that they would no longer host us, I stayed silent about Lucia's false leadership behaviors. I truly was selfish and despicable! I enjoyed everything God supplied me with and was hosted and cared for by my brothers and sisters, yet I had no consideration for God's will, and didn't protect the work of the

church. I had stayed on the sidelines and allowed a false leader to hold power within the church and disturb the work of the church. Where were my conscience and reason? I was completely unworthy to live before God!

After that, I read God's words: **"God's family does not allow those who do not practice the truth to remain, nor does it allow to remain those who deliberately dismantle the church. However, now is not the time to do the work of expulsion; such people will simply be exposed and cast out in the end. No more useless work is to be expended on these people; those who belong to Satan cannot stand on the side of the truth, whereas those who seek the truth can. People who do not practice the truth are unworthy of hearing the way of the truth and unworthy of bearing witness to the truth. The truth is simply not for their ears; rather, it is directed at those who practice it. Before every person's end is revealed, those who disturb the church and disrupt God's work will first be left aside for now, to be dealt with later. Once the work is complete, these people will each be exposed, and then they will be cast out. For the time being, while the truth is being provided, they will be ignored. When the whole truth is revealed to humanity, those people should be cast out; that will be the time when all people will be classed according to their kind. The petty tricks of those without discernment will lead to their destruction at the hands of the wicked, they will be lured away by them, never to return. And such treatment is what they deserve, because they do not love the truth, because they are incapable of standing on the side of the truth, because they follow evil people and stand on the side of evil people, and because they collude with evil people and defy God. They know perfectly well that what those evil people radiate is evil, yet they harden their hearts and turn their backs on the truth to follow them. Are these people who do not**

practice the truth but who do destructive and abominable things not all committing evil? Although there are those among them who style themselves as kings and others who follow them, are their God-defying natures not all the same? What excuse can they have to claim that God does not save them? What excuse can they have to claim that God is not righteous? Is it not their own evil that is destroying them? Is it not their own rebelliousness that is dragging them down into hell? People who practice the truth will, in the end, be saved and made perfect because of the truth. Those who do not practice the truth will, in the end, bring destruction upon themselves because of the truth. These are the ends that await those who practice the truth and those who do not”

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). I saw that I was the type of person revealed by God’s word, the type of person who doesn’t practice the truth. I was someone who God despised. In everything, I tried to preserve and protect myself. Faced with a false leader, I dared not adhere to principles, report her and bring her to light. Was I not simply kneeling to and colluding with Satan? Outwardly, I wasn’t standing with Lucia and protecting her, but I hadn’t reported or exposed her to be a false leader. I allowed her to confuse and deceive the brothers and sisters in the church and disturb and disrupt church work. By doing this, I was standing on Satan’s side. God’s words say: **“They know perfectly well that what those evil people radiate is evil, yet they harden their hearts and turn their backs on the truth to follow them. Are these people who do not practice the truth but who do destructive and abominable things not all committing evil?”** God’s words revealed precisely my behavior. I thought of how the Lord Jesus said: **“He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathers not with Me scatters abroad”** (Matthew 12:30). In the battle between God and Satan, not standing on God’s side is to stand on

Satan's side. There is no middle ground. But in the matter of reporting the false leader, I was trying to be clever, to be neutral, to play it safe and protect myself. Wasn't this just standing on Satan's side and betraying God? I had thought that many people lacked discernment of Lucia, but once God had completely revealed her and the time was right, she would naturally be replaced. Outwardly, that idea seemed very reasonable, but actually I was avoiding my responsibility, and seeking excuses to avoid practicing the truth. I was merely waiting for God to reveal her, rather than fulfilling my own responsibilities to expose and report her. In essence I was indulging a false leader who was doing evil and disrupting the work of the church. It wouldn't be over the line to call me a false leader's accomplice. Thinking of all this, I hated myself for being so selfish, despicable, weak, and incompetent. I was useless, a lackey of Satan! I had no testimony at all in the war against evil. Truly, God despised this! I came before God and prayed to repent. I asked God for the strength to break through the control of the dark forces, to stand on God's side, and to say "no" to the forces of Satan. I had wanted to write another letter reporting Lucia after I found more proof. But before I could, the church investigated and determined Lucia was a false leader who took the path of an antichrist, and replaced her. Later, I learned our letter to report her had been intercepted and detained by another false leader. That false leader was also replaced for not doing practical work. I was very happy to hear this news, but I also felt guilty, because I had acted as Satan's lackey in this matter, had failed to protect the church's work or to stand firm in my testimony.

After Lucia was replaced, a new sister temporarily took over church work, and I thought that was the end of this business, but it turned out not to be. Just over a month later, the brother I was partnered with told me that Lucia was still obstinate after being replaced. She was spreading among the

brothers and sisters that the newly elected leader was a false leader, to deceive the brothers and sisters into sympathizing with her, and was forming a clique around herself to have the new leader dismissed so she could retake her position as leader. When I heard about this, I was quite anxious. I had to find a way to tell the upper leaders about Lucia's evil behaviors as soon as possible. At that time, the new church leader was also writing a letter reporting Lucia's situation to the upper leaders and was trying to decide how to clearly explain the situation. I'm quite good at writing, so I took the initiative and offered to write the letter of report on her behalf. The following morning, having finished the report letter, my partnered brother suddenly said, "Sign our names on the letter too." I was stunned when I heard that, thinking, "Lucia is vicious, insidious, and knows how to deceive others. If we failed to report her this time, and she retook power and became a church leader again, given her history of abusing her power by expelling those she resented, she would definitely have us replaced, or even expelled. But not signing the letter couldn't be justified, because it had been ghostwritten by us." I thought for a moment, then said, "Let's sign the letter as ghostwriters." The truth is that I wanted to do my best to distance myself, so even if I was suppressed, it wouldn't be as harshly. My partnered brother dealt with me then, "Why is it so hard to sign your name? You're being so cunning!" That remark cut deeply into my heart. I realized that I couldn't be cunning and try to protect myself anymore, and that I had to practice the truth and be an honest person.

Later, I reflected on myself. Why was it that every time something happened involving the interests of the church which required me to express my opinion, I became afraid, shrunk back, and tried to protect myself? What nature was controlling me when I did this? I read the words of God: **"Satan corrupts people through the education and influence of national**

governments and of the famous and great. Their devilish words have become man's life and nature. 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost' is a well-known satanic saying that has been instilled into everyone, and this has become man's life. There are other words of philosophies for living that are also like this. Satan uses each nation's traditional culture to educate, deceive, and corrupt people, causing mankind to fall into and be engulfed by a boundless abyss of destruction, and in the end, people are destroyed by God because they serve Satan and resist God. Some people have served as public officials in society for decades. Imagine asking them the following question: 'You've done so well in this capacity, what are the main famous sayings that you live by?' They might say, 'The one thing I understand is this: "Officials do not make things difficult for those who bear gifts, and those who do not flatter accomplish nothing.'" This is the satanic philosophy their career is based on. Are these words not representative of such people's nature? Unscrupulously using any means to obtain position has become their nature, officialdom and career success are their goals. There are still many satanic poisons in people's lives, conduct, and behavior. For example, their philosophies for living, their ways of doing things, and their maxims are all filled with the poisons of the great red dragon, and these all come from Satan. Thus, all things that flow through people's bones and blood are of Satan. ... Mankind has been profoundly corrupted by Satan. Satan's venom flows through the blood of every person, and it can be said that man's nature is corrupt, evil, antagonistic, and in opposition to God, filled by and immersed in the philosophies and poisons of Satan. It has become, entirely, the nature essence of Satan. This is why people resist God and stand in opposition to God" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last

Days. How to Know Man's Nature). Having read God's word, I realized that I didn't dare to confront false leaders and antichrists head-on because I lived by satanic logic, laws, and worldly philosophies such as "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "The less trouble, the better," and "Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes." There's also "Let every man skin his own skunk." Because I lived by these satanic poisons, I was especially selfish, despicable, cowardly, and deceitful. In everything, the first thing I considered was my own interests and potential gains and losses. When I first wanted to report Lucia, I didn't dare do it, because I wanted to protect myself. Now, Lucia was forming a clique, contending for power in the church and disrupting and disturbing church work, and I still lacked the courage to stand up and practice the truth. I pulled my head into my shell to hide like a turtle, terrified that the moment I showed my head, I would be punished if I was discovered by the false leader and antichrist. In name, I believed in God and followed God, but there was no place for God in my heart. I even viewed God's house just like the society, believing that God's house was a place without fairness or righteousness where I had to constantly be cautious and learn to protect myself, or else run the risk of being suppressed and punished. This kind of viewpoint was nothing but slander and blasphemy to God! God's house is not the outside world. Satan reigns in the world and the wicked rule, and the good can only be bullied and oppressed. However, God's house is ruled by Christ and the truth. False leaders and antichrists find no place to stand in God's house, and as God's chosen people gain understanding of the truth and discernment, they will all be reported and brought to light, banished and cast out. This is God's righteousness. God's words say: **"The wicked will surely be punished"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God). God's word is the truth and facts that God will

accomplish. I had also seen real examples of false leaders and antichrists being replaced or expelled. Was this not God's righteousness? But I had been completely blinded by my own interests, and had thought only of how to protect myself. I believed in God, but didn't believe in God's word, His faithfulness, or His righteousness. I saw things from the viewpoint of an unbeliever. This was the manifestation of a nonbeliever! If I continued to live by satanic philosophies, didn't practice the truth, and didn't protect the work of the church, in the end I would be condemned and cast out by God. Realizing these things, I understood that in the matter of reporting Lucia, I had to fulfill my responsibilities to the utmost, and even if one day I was suppressed or expelled by Lucia, there would also be lessons for me to learn and it would be with God's good intentions. Thinking on this I very calmly signed my name to the report letter. In that moment, I felt secure and at peace, and also a sense of pride. I felt I had finally stood up and became a decent person.

About a month after the report letter had been sent, we finally got the good news. Lucia had done so many wicked deeds and refused to change, so she was defined as an antichrist and expelled from the church. Those evildoers who followed Lucia in her evil deeds and disruption of church work were also expelled. Some who showed expressions of repentance were not classed as evildoers, and were allowed to stay in the church and given a chance to repent. A chaos that had continued for several months finally subsided, and normal church life resumed. I was very happy to see this result, but I also felt remorse and regret, because in the matter of reporting the false leader and antichrist, I had been selfish and despicable, protecting myself and even doubting God's righteousness and the rule of truth in God's house. A large portion of me was still a nonbeliever. I saw

that I was deeply corrupt and that I owed God so much. I swore that the next time something like this happened, I would stand on God's side.

Four years later, something similar happened again. The leaders of my church, Kayden and two others, because they spoke of words and doctrines and did not do practical work, were condemned as false leaders and dismissed, and the church temporarily sent two leaders to take over responsibilities. When these two sisters came, Kayden spread the fallacy that our church didn't take "charity handouts." It meant that he didn't accept the two sisters transferred from outside to be our leaders. They started to look for excuses to attack these two sisters, and wheedled other brothers and sisters into standing on their side and writing a report letter saying they should be recalled. Later, they also asked me to participate in this. As I read the report letter they wrote, I saw that some of the wicked behaviors they provided were just normal examples of exposing corruption, not wicked deeds at all. Others were outright exaggeration, and some were plainly false accusations and lies that distorted the facts. Their condemnations in the letter were overblown, wanton, and vicious. I realized the real purpose of their report letter wasn't to protect the church's work, banish false leaders, or protect God's chosen people, it was to seize power, retake their positions as church leaders, control the church, and control God's chosen people. They were antichrists! At first, I wanted to stay out of the matter, because my group leader had also been deceived by them and was participating in the report, and I was merely an ordinary believer, so these were hardly people I could afford to offend. But as I thought of how the antichrist Lucia had been reported and banished four years before, and how I'd had no testimony, I decided not to hide or shrink back again. I fellowshipped with the brothers and sisters around me so that they could clearly understand the real goals and intentions of the people who wrote this report letter and have

discernment about them. After that, I reported and exposed to the church the evil deeds this clique had committed to contend for power. The church investigated and verified the situation, determined that these people were antichrists and expelled them from the church. When I saw that the notice expelling this group of antichrists contained some evidence I had supplied, I was very happy, and also comforted. I felt honored at having lived up to my responsibilities in this matter.

Experiencing these things allowed me to see the great wisdom of God's work. God allowed false leaders and antichrists to emerge within the church so that I could develop discernment. Through them being revealed and expelled, I gained some knowledge of God's righteous disposition, I saw how God's house is ruled by Christ and the truth, and my faith in God grew. Thanks be to God!

34. Released From the Shackles of Home

By Cheng Shi, China

In June of 2012, I accepted Almighty God's work in the last days. Through reading the words of God, I knew for certain that Almighty God was the Lord Jesus returned, the Savior come to earth to save humanity, and I was filled with excitement. I thought of my husband who often used to go to church with his supervisor while he was studying as a graduate student in China. When he went abroad, he also used to go to church with the local Chinese community. I wanted to tell him the good news as soon as possible.

My husband returned to China at the beginning of September and I testified the work of Almighty God in the last days to him. It surprised me when, after he heard it, he found all kinds of rumors fabricated by the CCP and negative propaganda slandering The Church of Almighty God online. After that, he glared at me and shouted, "Look at this! What you believe in is 'Eastern Lightning,' which the CCP has been cracking down on for years. The minute they arrest you, you'll be sentenced and sent to prison. You're not allowed to believe in this anymore!" Then he tore up all my books of God's word. At the time, I was furious, but then I thought my husband opposed me believing because he was momentarily deceived by the CCP's rumors, but that he would understand later. I knew, though, that no matter what happened, believing in God was the correct path in life, and that I would never give it up. After that, my husband called me every day to track my movements. At the time, I was a graduate student, so to avoid his surveillance, I attended gatherings near my school, and only went home on the weekends. At the end of 2012, the CCP launched a campaign of more manic suppression and arrests against The Church of Almighty God. On the internet, television, and in newspapers there were rumors and fallacies

slandering and attacking The Church of Almighty God everywhere, and the government used this as an excuse to arrest believers in God all over. My husband was afraid I would be arrested for believing in God, which might affect him and our daughter, so his restrictions on me became more and more severe. He also threatened me, saying that he would divorce me if I kept believing in God. This made me very upset. In China, believing in God doesn't just carry a risk of being sentenced to prison for us, we also suffer persecution from our non-believing families. Things are so hard for us! If my husband and I divorced, what would happen to our daughter? For those few days, I had no interest in performing my duties. I was really miserable.

When one of the sisters learned about my state, she read me a passage of God's word. God says: **"In every step of work that God does within people, externally it appears to be interactions between people, as if born of human arrangements or from human disturbance. But behind the scenes, every step of work, and everything that happens, is a wager made by Satan before God, and requires people to stand firm in their testimony to God. Take when Job was tried, for example: Behind the scenes, Satan was making a bet with God, and what happened to Job was the deeds of men and the disturbance of men. Behind every step of work that God does in you is Satan's wager with God—behind it all is a battle"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). God's words made me understand that these difficult circumstances outwardly were my husband restricting and persecuting me, but actually behind this was Satan's manipulation and disturbance. God wants to save me, and Satan causes all kinds of disturbances and disruptions to make me betray God, lose His salvation, and eventually be dragged down to hell with it. Satan is so sinister and vicious! Knowing this, I prayed to God, "God, my stature is too small, so I ask that You give me faith and

enable me to stand firm against the disturbances of Satan. Even if my husband divorces me, I won't betray You, and I won't fall for Satan's schemes." After I prayed, it wasn't so hard to bear, and I continued to spread the gospel and fulfill my duty.

Not long after this, I was arrested by the police at a gathering. The police accused me of "disturbing social order" and detained me for 30 days. At my interrogation, the police threatened me, "Your school already knows you've been arrested for believing in God, and they plan to expel you. But, if you cooperate with us and tell us what you know, we will speak on your behalf to the dean, and your graduate studies can continue. Think hard about it!" After they left, I looked at the cold iron bars of the cell, and I felt utterly depressed and miserable. I thought, "If I am expelled from my school for believing in God, it will be a political issue and the matter will be recorded in my student record and police file, no hospital will ever hire me, and my dream of becoming a doctor will come to nothing. At just 30 years old, my studies, work, and future will be totally gone. How would I live on? How would I face the discrimination and ridicule of the people around me?" For a few days, I couldn't eat or sleep well.

During that time, I prayed to God about this often. One morning, I found myself unconsciously humming a hymn of God's word titled **"The Most Meaningful Life"**: **"You are a created being—you should of course worship God and pursue a life of meaning. Since you are a human being, you should expend yourself for God and endure all suffering! You should gladly and assuredly accept the little suffering you are subjected to today and live a meaningful life, like Job and Peter. You are people who pursue the right path, those who seek improvement. You are people who rise up in the nation of the great red dragon, those whom God calls righteous. Is that not the most meaningful life?"** (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Practice (2)). As I sang that hymn, I felt especially touched, and I couldn't stop my tears from flowing. I am a created being, and I should as a matter of course believe in and worship God. It's natural and right that I do. God ordained that I be born into a family that believed in the Lord so that I would know of God's existence from an early age. In the last days, God was gracious to me and He allowed me to hear the Lord's voice and receive Him. He allowed me to enjoy the watering and supply of God's word, accept its judgment and purification, and to receive a chance to be saved by God. This is an incredible blessing! I thought of many people throughout the generations who have followed God. To spread God's gospel, they suffered persecution and hardship, and many even gave their lives. They all created beautiful, resounding testimony for God. What was my bit of suffering in light of this? I thought, "If I give up believing in God in order to protect my own interests and future, then do I still have a conscience? Am I worthy of being called human?" That thought gave me strength, and I swore an oath that no matter whether I was expelled or what my future and fate turned out to be, and regardless of how people around me rejected or slandered me, I would never betray God, and I would stand witness for God. At my final interrogation, I very calmly told the police, "If the school expels me, I only ask that you tell my husband to go to the school to collect my things." When the police saw how determined I was, they left, looking very discouraged. I was very grateful to God.

After I was released, my husband angrily said, "The police told me that if you are arrested for believing in God again, it won't just be a month of detention. This will affect me and our daughter as well. Our daughter's university and job prospects will be affected, and she won't be able to work in public service. Don't you understand? Because of your arrest for

believing in God, I suffered for a month too. I can't tell you how many times I cried, and I nearly got into a car accident. To get you out of the detention center, I went about begging for help and thoroughly embarrassed myself! I don't ever want to suffer like that again. Could you stop believing, and think more about our family?" After that, to stop me from contacting my brothers and sisters, he watched me like I was a criminal. He wouldn't let me leave the house and didn't give me any independence at all. When he went to work, he had his mother watch me. He called constantly to ask where I was and what I was doing. He also incessantly told me about various CCP revolutionary movements and about the violent methods used to let me know the consequences of disobeying the CCP and eliminate my ideas about believing in God. He also said, "I know the rumors the CCP fabricates about your church are false. You want to believe in God, but they don't allow it. If you disobey, they will ruin your life. Look at the people who ended up dying so tragically during the Cultural Revolution and in the June Fourth Incident. If you offend the CCP, you can't even escape abroad." My mother-in-law joined in, saying, "The CCP is no good, but they hold power. We're just unimportant, ordinary people, and we're not strong enough to resist them." After that, I was expelled from school for my belief in God, and my husband blamed all the bad things that happened to our family on my belief in God. Whenever anything bothered him, he would scold me, mock me, and take digs at me. This kind of life left me feeling very depressed, and on top of that, I couldn't read God's word or contact my brothers and sisters, so I was especially miserable, and I didn't know when those days would end.

During that period, I often prayed to God to ask Him to enlighten me, guide me, and allow me to understand His will. One day, I remembered a passage of God's word: **"The great red dragon persecutes God and is the**

enemy of God, and so, in this land, those who believe in God are thus subjected to humiliation and oppression.... Because it is embarked upon in a land that opposes God, all of God's work faces tremendous obstacles, and accomplishing many of His words takes time; thus, people are refined as a result of God's words, which is also part of suffering. It is tremendously difficult for God to carry out His work in the land of the great red dragon—but it is through this difficulty that God does one stage of His work, making manifest His wisdom and His wondrous deeds, and using this opportunity to make this group of people complete” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). From God's word, I understood that because the great red dragon loathes God and wildly resists Him, as believers in God in China, we are bound to endure much suffering, but this suffering is meaningful. God uses this kind of persecution and tribulation to perfect our faith and give us discernment. Only because I believed in God, the CCP had detained me, had my school expel me, and used my family's work and future to threaten me and force me to give up the true way. The CCP truly is evil! My husband tried to stop me from believing in God because he feared their violent measures. Personally experiencing the CCP's persecution allowed me to see its demonic essence of being ferociously evil and hating the truth. I thought, “The more the CCP persecutes me, the more I will reject it, forsake it, and follow God to the end.” Ten months later, I found an opportunity to get in contact with the brothers and sisters. When I could finally read God's word again, I was very excited, and felt the preciousness of God's word even more. The more I read, the more illuminated and invigorated I felt.

One day several months later, my husband found my devotional notebook in my room. When he knew I was still believing in God, he lost

his temper and knocked me to the ground with one punch and then punched me at least 20 more times in the head. I was seeing stars, and I had bumps the size of a pigeon egg on my head. I remember the cold fury on my husband's face and how my 6-year-old daughter was so frightened she started wailing, "Don't hit mom! Don't hit mom! ...". My husband grabbed me by my collar and threw me out the door as he said furiously, "If you keep believing in God, then get out of my house!" When I saw how my husband had changed, how cruel and ruthless he was, and how he didn't care at all for our years together, I felt my heart break. What was most unbearable was seeing how afraid my daughter was of his violent temper. The instant he approached me, she thought he was going to beat me, so she ran in front of me and raised her little arms to protect me and said, "You stay away from mom!" Sometimes, when I was upstairs, as soon as my husband came near the stairs, my daughter screamed at him not to go up the stairs. Every time I saw my daughter's face so full of fear and anxiety, the psychological damage of dealing with domestic violence at such a young age, it was like a knife twisting in my heart, and I hated the great red dragon even more. All these disasters were caused by the persecution of the Communist Party.

One day, when my husband came back after work, he took out his cell phone and said angrily, "Look, the CCP has arrested so many people again. Do you still want to believe? Do you have a death wish? You can believe in God, fine, but don't drag me and our daughter down with you. If you are arrested again, our lives will become impossible. If I knew you would take the path of believing in God, I never would have married you." What my husband said hurt me very deeply. I thought back on the previous period of time, how he had given me less freedom than a criminal only because I believed in God, how frequently he had beat me, and how this hurt my

daughter, and I realized I couldn't compromise anymore, so I agreed to my husband's request for a divorce. When he saw that I insisted on continuing to believe in God, he called my brother and asked him to persuade me. My brother always loved me, and he was always proud of me, but because I was persecuted by the CCP, I was expelled from school and forbidden from continuing my graduate studies. If I got divorced after that, I would complete my transformation into the village laughingstock. My brother would be so disappointed! I didn't know how to face my brother, I cried out to God in my heart and asked Him to protect me so that I could stand witness for God, and so that no matter what happened, I would never give up my belief in God. Then, I remembered a passage of God's word: **"You must possess My courage within you, and you must have principles when it comes to facing relatives who do not believe. For My sake, however, you also must not yield to any dark forces. Rely on My wisdom to walk the perfect way; do not allow any of Satan's conspiracies to take hold"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 10). That's right. God created humankind, and belief in God and following God are natural and right. We must stand firm in the choice of our path, and we must not be fooled by Satan. We can't let even the closest people interfere. After my brother came, my husband kept criticizing me in front of him, saying that I shouldn't believe in God. When my husband saw how calm I was, he raised his hand to hit me, but my brother stopped him. My brother calmly said to me, "You're a grown-up, and you can make your own decisions about your life. But you need to think about what happens to your daughter if you get a divorce. If you look at what happened to my daughter, you'll know what will happen to your daughter. ..." My brother's words made me sad for a while, because I thought about his divorce, and how his daughter was often

ridiculed and looked down on by the people around her. It's such a shame for a child to be without a mother. As things were for me at that point, if I got a divorce, my husband would definitely get custody of our daughter, and she'd become a motherless child. Wouldn't she suffer discrimination and ridicule from her teachers and classmates? Without me by her side, if she lived with her unbeliever father and grandparents, would she be able to walk the path of believing in God? When I thought of how young she was, I felt like I couldn't bear to part with her. I was honestly miserable during that period of time, so I prayed to God, "God, I can't let go of my daughter. I always feel sorrow at the thought of her future. I ask You to enlighten me, guide me, and protect my heart."

After that, I read two passages of God's word: **"Besides birth and childrearing, the parents' responsibility in their children's lives is simply to provide them with a formal environment to grow up in, for nothing except the predestination of the Creator has a bearing on a person's fate. No one can control what kind of future a person will have; it is predetermined long in advance, and not even one's parents can change one's fate. As far as fate is concerned, everyone is independent, and everyone has their own fate. So, no one's parents can stave off one's fate in life or exert the slightest influence on the role one plays in life. It could be said that the family into which one is destined to be born and the environment in which one grows up are nothing more than the preconditions for fulfilling one's mission in life. They do not in any way determine a person's fate in life or the kind of destiny within which a person fulfills their mission. And so, no one's parents can assist one in accomplishing one's mission in life, and likewise, no one's relatives can help one assume one's role in life. How one accomplishes one's mission and in what kind of living environment one**

performs one's role are entirely determined by one's fate in life. In other words, no other objective conditions can influence a person's mission, which is predestined by the Creator. All people become mature in the particular environments in which they grow up; then gradually, step by step, they set off down their own roads in life and fulfill the destinies planned for them by the Creator. Naturally, involuntarily, they enter the vast sea of humanity and assume their own posts in life, where they begin to fulfill their responsibilities as created beings for the sake of the Creator's predestination, for the sake of His sovereignty"

(The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). "People's plans and fantasies are perfect; do they not know that the number of children they have, their children's appearance, abilities, and so forth, are not for them to decide, that not a bit of their children's fates is in their hands? Humans are not the masters of their own fate, yet they hope to change the fates of the younger generation; they are powerless to escape their own fates, yet they try to control those of their sons and daughters. Are they not overestimating themselves? Is this not human foolishness and ignorance?" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the

Unique III). From God's words I understood that God created everything and has sovereignty over everything, and that people's fates are all in God's hands. Parents are only here to raise their children, they cannot, however, change their children's fates. I always thought I could influence and control my daughter's life, that she could find happiness as long as I was by her side, and that I could lead her down the path of belief in God. But on second thought, I didn't even have control over my own fate, so how could I control my daughter's fate? I thought of how my daughter fell ill and passed out a few days ago, and I couldn't help ease her pain at all, I could only stand by and watch. I could only beg God to protect my daughter. My

daughter tripped while climbing and fell off a cliff. I couldn't do anything at all. But she was mysteriously saved by a dead tree at the edge of the mountain cliff. These incidents made me understand, that even if I took care of my daughter in every possible way, there was no guarantee she wouldn't become ill or suffer disaster. People's lives are in God's hands. The suffering a person endures over the course of their life and what path they take were preordained by God long ago. People have no say and no influence over these things. Once I understood these things, I felt a great sense of release. I realized I should put my child in God's hands and obey God's sovereignty and arrangements. As a created being, this was what I should do.

Later, when my husband saw that I insisted on believing in God, he decided to divorce me. He asked me to move out of the house with nothing and refused to give me custody of our daughter. He even wanted to take away my visitation rights. When I asked him about the division of property, he even hit me over the head with a stainless steel cup. I used my hands to protect myself but my wrists were bruised, which meant I was unable to carry heavy objects for more than two months. He also viciously hit my back several times, which caused me to cough violently for more than a month. After all of that, he seized the hundreds of thousands I had saved from work. He said, "You believe in God, don't you? Then ask your God to give you food and water." When I saw my husband being so unreasonable and vicious, I recalled God's words: **"If a man becomes infuriated and flies into a rage when God is mentioned, has he seen God? Does he know who God is? He does not know who God is, does not believe in Him, and God has not spoken to him. God has never troubled him, so why would he be angry? Could we say that this person is evil? Worldly trends, eating, drinking, and pleasure-seeking, and chasing celebrities**

—none of these things would bother such a man. However, at the very mention of the word ‘God,’ or of the truth of God’s words, he flies into a rage. Does this not constitute having an evil nature? This is sufficient to prove that this is man’s evil nature” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique V). What God’s words revealed allowed me to clearly see my husband’s evil nature of resisting God. In the beginning, when my husband learned I believed in Almighty God, he was particularly hostile, and he even tore up my books of God’s word. Later, he started to frantically try to stop me from believing in God and he treated me like a prisoner, didn’t give me any freedom, and often viciously beat me. It seemed like he wanted to kill me. When we divorced, he seized all of my assets to force me into desperation and make it impossible for me to live my life. His goal was to make me betray and deny God. Now I clearly see the nature essence of my husband. He was a devil who hates and resists God. My husband and I had no common language. Living with him, I had no freedom, and I was beaten and restricted. This was agonizing! How could this be a home? These were nothing but shackles. This was hell.

After my divorce, I was no longer hindered and restricted by my husband. I was able to go to gatherings and read God’s words normally, and I quickly took up duties in the church. I felt a deep sense of ease and release. Thank God for saving me!

35. A Life on the Brink

By Wang Fang, China

In 2008, I was responsible for transporting church literature. This is a very commonplace sort of duty in a country with freedom of religion, but in China, it's really dangerous. According to Communist Party law, anyone caught for transporting religious literature can be sentenced to seven years or more. For this reason, the other brothers and sisters and I were all extremely cautious in the course of our duty. But on the 26th of August, as I was walking along the road, I was suddenly surrounded by several police cars and the police pushed me into one of them. I was really nervous. I thought of a sister who had been arrested for the same thing, and she was given 10 years. Would I get 10 years, too? If I really did spend that long in prison, would I even make it out alive? My heart clenched up at that thought, and I rushed to call out to God: "Oh God! I don't know how the police are going to torture me. Please watch over me, and give me faith and strength." I thought of these words from God after praying: **"You should not be afraid of this and that; no matter how many difficulties and dangers you might face, you are capable of remaining steady before Me, unobstructed by any hindrance, so that My will may be carried out unimpeded. This is your duty.... Now is the time that I shall test you: Will you offer your loyalty to Me? Can you loyally follow Me to the end of the road? Be not afraid; with My support, who could ever block this road?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 10). This bolstered my faith and courage. God is the Ruler of all things and the entire universe is in His hands. So aren't the police in His hands, too? Without God allowing it, not a single hair on my head can be touched. God uses oppression and hardship to perfect my faith, so I had to

pray and lean on God, and stand witness for Him. Even if I did get 10 years, I was determined to never sell out my brothers and sisters, to never betray God.

The police took me to a two-story building outside of the city. A tall, heavy-set middle-aged officer holding a cold bottle of water rushed right toward me with a frightening look on his face, knocking on a table while shouting, “What’s your name? What do you do in the church? Who have you been in contact with? Who’s your church leader?” When I didn’t say anything, he lifted up the bottle and smashed it over my head, leaving my head buzzing. He continued questioning me, using all sorts of foul-mouthed language. I just kept my head down and prayed without giving him a single answer. Then he smashed the bottle against my forehead—for a moment my vision went blurry and I felt like my skull was about to split open. It hurt so much it brought tears. Then he bellowed fiercely, “You’ll be tortured if you don’t talk, and if you don’t talk after that, don’t even think about coming out alive!” I was pretty afraid. I was thinking that if he kept hitting me like that, then even if it didn’t split my skull open, I was sure to end up with a concussion. I wondered if I’d be beaten to death. I quickly called out to God asking for His protection, and I set my resolve that no matter how he beat me, I could never betray God, never be a Judas. Just then his cellphone rang, and after taking the call he walked off. Another officer put a canvas sack over my head, tied it snugly with a cord, and then dragged me into an empty room. I felt hot and humid under the sack. I’m not sure how much time passed before they took me up to the second floor. A division chief with the Provincial Public Security Department surnamed Gong gritted his teeth and threatened me: “We could give you 10 years just for believing in Almighty God. Tell us everything you know right now, or else no one can save you!” He also said he was going to get my employer to suspend my

wages. Since I still wasn't talking, he told someone else to go search for any previous arrest records for me. That was really nerve-racking, because I'd been arrested in 2003 for spreading the gospel, and was detained for five months. If they found my record, I'd definitely get a harsher sentence. They ended up not finding anything—I knew that was God's protection. I silently gave Him thanks. The police took me to a detention house sometime past midnight, where a corrections officer got a few prisoners to strip me naked, had me extend my arms out straight, then do three squats. They also tossed all my outer clothing outside of the cell, and when I saw they were even about to toss all my undergarments out, I rushed to yank them back and I put them back on. Squatting there undressed, looking at the four security cameras right there on the wall, I felt incredibly humiliated. The next morning after all the prisoners got up, all I could do was grab a bedcover to wrap around my body. Then a prisoner there tossed me some clothing and whispered, "Put it on, quick." Another one lent me a pair of pants. I knew God had set this up—I was so grateful. Later that morning, a corrections officer threw my clothing back into the cell, but when I looked at it, I saw the zippers and buttons on my pants and other clothing had been cut off, so I had to hold my pants up with one hand and hold the front closed with the other, and walk along bent partway over. Seeing me that way, the other prisoners made fun of me and ordered me to do things, and some of them intentionally pulled my pants down and said all sorts of mocking things. Prayer was the only way I got through that day.

Midday on the third day, the police showed up to bring me back in for questioning. They brought me into a dimly lit, empty room, where I saw an iron torture device hanging on the wall, and there were dark bloodstains all around it. It was sinister and terrifying. They handcuffed me with my hands behind my back, then a Captain Yang with the National Security Brigade

and a few criminal police officers surrounded me, eyeing me intensely like hungry wolves. Captain Yang had a few photos of other sisters for me to identify and he asked me where the church's money was kept. He also threatened me savagely, "Spit it out! If you don't talk, we'll beat you to death!" I thought that even if they did, I still wouldn't be a Judas. Another chubby cop said, "You'd better talk today! If you don't, I can tell you, this fist of mine prefers meat. I studied four years of boxing at the police academy and I specially trained for a technique called 'swinging the sledgehammer.' It's punching a special point on your shoulder, and with a single punch, your bones and all your innards will be crushed. Under my fist, there isn't a single person who doesn't confess." He was getting more and more smug as he spoke. Then Captain Yang took an official, red-letterhead document out of his bag, waved it in front of my face and said, "This is a confidential document issued by the Central Committee specifically about The Church of Almighty God. Once we get you people we can put you on death's door, no one cares if you die! After we beat you to death, we just dump your bodies in the mountains and no one ever knows about it. We've got all sorts of torture instruments to deal with believers like you. There's a kind of wire whip that you can dip in freezing cold water, and every time you whip someone a strip of flesh comes off. That person ends up with the bones showing." Hearing all these horrifying things made my heart clench with fear, and what ran through my mind was that if they used those torture devices on me, that was likely to kill me. And if they threw my body in the mountains I'd just be eaten by wild dogs. What a tragedy that would be! Terrified, I quickly called out to God, "God, I'm so scared the police will torture me with these instruments. My faith isn't strong enough—please protect me and give me faith and courage so that no matter what they do to me, even if I have to give my life for it, I can stand

witness.” Seeing I still wasn’t talking, Captain Yang swung his arms toward my head and smacked me a dozen or so times, left and right. I couldn’t even stay standing. I squeezed my eyes shut and tears streamed down my face. The one standing on my left who said he would “swing the sledgehammer” at me came down on a point on my shoulder with all his strength. For a moment, it felt like all my bones had snapped, and he went on hitting me as he counted. The officer on my right kicked me in the right kneecap and I fell down to the floor. They shouted at me to stand up. With my hands cuffed behind my back, I got back up with difficulty, in spite of the pain. They kicked me right back down again. The “sledgehammer” officer went on hitting me on the shoulder over and over, all the while demanding to know, “Who have you been in contact with? Where’s the church’s money? Tell me now, or it’ll be the end of you!” Furious, I asked them, “What law do I break, that you’re beating me this way? Doesn’t the constitution say we have freedom of belief?” The captain said savagely, “Enough out of you! If you don’t want to die here, open your mouth! Where’s the church’s money? What we want is money. We’ll beat you to death this very day if you don’t tell us!” While saying this he was hitting me in the head over and over, each punch harder than the last. I was kicked, punched to the floor by them over and over, and time after time ordered to stand back up. I don’t know how long they beat me. All I could feel was my head and ears buzzing, and I couldn’t open my eyes, and they felt like they were going to burst out of my head. My face was so swollen it had turned numb and blood was leaking from the corners of my mouth. My heart felt like it was going to fall out of my chest, and my shoulder bones felt like they’d been pulverized. I fell motionless on the floor and my whole body hurt, as if it had totally fallen to pieces. I was calling out to God for His protection nonstop, and I held just one thought in my head: Even if I die, I won’t be a Judas!

Seeing I wasn't saying a word, the captain tried some persuasion: "We're asking you these questions, but in fact, we already know the answers. We're just verifying. You were already sold out by someone else, so is taking the fall for someone else really worth it? At your age, why go through all this suffering? Is there really any need? It's just some religion, right? Tell us what you know and we'll let you go right away. That would spare you so much misery." Then they said some blasphemous things. Hearing their filthy words and seeing the savage looks on their faces was infuriating for me. In order to arrest more brothers and sisters and to seize the church's money, they switched tactics to entice me. They were really sinister and vile! Whether or not anyone else had sold me out, I would still stand my ground, and absolutely not betray God or other brothers and sisters. After that, the captain used my daughter to threaten me. Looking at me with a phony smile, he said, "Isn't your daughter in Beijing? We could arrest her and torture her right in front of you. If you don't talk, we'll throw the two of you into a men's prison and let those guys ravage you to death. I could do that with a snap of my finger, and I do what I say." I knew that the Communist Party is capable of anything at all, and I wasn't afraid of being beaten to death, but I couldn't bear the thought of having my daughter and I thrown into a prison for men. I'd rather be beaten to death than be degraded that way. This was a really frightening thought for me, so I quickly called out to God, "God, please watch over my heart, and no matter how they torture or humiliate me, I can't be a Judas." After my prayer, I thought of Daniel being thrown into the lions' den. The lions didn't eat Daniel because God didn't allow them to hurt him. I needed to have faith in God. Those evil police were also in God's hands, so they couldn't do anything to me if God didn't allow it. Since I still wasn't talking, one of them yelled at me, wild with rage, "We'll beat you to death this very day if you don't talk!"

Saying this, he backed up a couple steps, made a fist, lunged straight at me with a fierce light in his eyes, and smashed his fist right into my chest. I went headfirst down onto the ground and lost my breath for quite a while. All my insides and bones felt like they'd been shattered, and my heart felt like it had been ripped out with pliers. I didn't dare breathe too hard because of the pain. My head was on the floor and I was sweating all over. I wanted to cry out but I couldn't manage it—it felt like something was jamming my throat. I wanted to cry, but the tears wouldn't come. At that moment, I really felt like death would be better than that. I weakened, feeling like I'd already reached my physical limit, and thought to myself that if they kept beating me like that, it would be better to just die and have it over with. Then they'd stop interrogating and torturing me, and I'd be freed. I considered telling them something trivial, but then I knew that if I gave them an inch, they would want a mile, and would start interrogating me even more fiercely. No: No matter what, I couldn't sell out the brothers and sisters and have them suffer that kind of torture. I silently called out for God's protection. Just then something from God's words came very clearly into my mind: **“Toward those who showed Me not the slightest loyalty during times of tribulation, I shall be merciful no more, for My mercy only extends so far. I have no liking, furthermore, for anyone who has once betrayed Me, much less do I like to associate with those who sell out the interests of their friends. This is My disposition, regardless of who the person may be”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). God's words reminded me just at the right time that His righteous disposition will tolerate no human offense. God detests, He hates those who betray Him, and that sort of person will suffer eternal punishment, body and soul. Through all my years of faith, I'd enjoyed so much of God's love and the sustenance of His words, and now

that it was time for me to stand witness for God, wouldn't it be unconscionable of me to betray Him so I could greedily cling to life? I wouldn't be worthy of being human! So I swore that even if it meant my death, I wouldn't become a Judas. I wouldn't betray God, but would absolutely give testimony!

Just then that awful captain kicked me while shouting, "Get up! Don't you play dead, dammit!" But I didn't have the strength to haul myself up. A couple of officers hoisted me up. I was in a daze, my mind was blank and my head buzzing; my chest hurt so much I was afraid to breathe, and I was seeing double everywhere. They were still hammering me with questions. A wave of anger rose up in me and I mustered up all my strength to say, "Then I'll die! Just beat me to death, then!" They were stunned into silence, every single one of them just staring blankly at me. I knew that surge of strength and courage was given to me by God, and I thanked Him in my heart. They'd originally been planning to interrogate me using torture in shifts, but sometime after 5 p.m. they got a call from the Provincial Public Security Department telling them to go report on the results of their questioning, so they halted their interrogation. Leaning against the wall, I sat paralyzed on the ground, crying out of gratitude toward God. It was God safeguarding me that had allowed me to come through, otherwise with my physical state, I would have died long before. Afterward, the rest of the officers left except the "sledgehammer" one. He looked at me and said, "Auntie, I've never hit a woman before. You're the first one, and none of those big, strong men could handle 30 of my punches. Do you know how many times I've hit you? It's already been over 30 times. I never could have imagined a lady of your age would be able to handle that, and you haven't said a single word of what we want to know. I've been with the criminal police for a decade, and I've never interrogated a case like you." I had to

give thanks to God when I heard that. Not being beaten to death was entirely God's protection.

After 7 p.m. that evening, they took me back to the detention house and warned me, "When you go back there you absolutely can't tell anyone we've hit you. If you do, next time we question you it'll be even worse." While speaking, they picked up a towel and wiped the dust off my pants, straightened my clothing and hair, and then used a wet towel to wipe my face clean. After taking me back to the cell, they lied to the guards, saying I wasn't feeling well because I had a heart condition flaring up. I was so angry. They were really despicable and knew no shame! Back in the cell I lay on my bunk, unable to move. My scalp was so tender I didn't dare to touch it and I couldn't hear out of my left ear at all. My mouth was too swollen to open and my cheeks were black and blue. I was bruised all over my body, all over my legs, and there were very clear purple fist marks on my chest. My left shoulder was dislocated, so I had to support it with my right hand. An exam done later on found that multiple bones in my chest had been broken and I also had misaligned vertebrae. I was afraid to lie flat and especially to sit up; a deep breath made my heart and chest cavity feel like they were being stabbed with shards of glass. Breathing out very slowly would mitigate the pain a little bit. When the prison doctor saw me in that state, he told the prisoners on night watch to check my nose once every two hours, to see if I was still breathing. When the corrections officers came to work every morning, they'd ask first thing if I'd died or not. I didn't eat or drink for two straight days and everyone else in the cell thought there was no way I'd survive. I overheard a couple of the night watch prisoners commenting really quietly. One of them said, "They're not getting her treatment or even notifying her family. I think she's just waiting here to die." The other said, "The corrections officer said that murderers, arsonists,

and prostitutes can all buy their release, it's just the believers in Almighty God that can't get out. She just has a few days left to live." It was so awful to hear them saying things like that. "Am I really going to die in here this way? I still haven't seen God's day of glory. If I died in this place, the brothers and sisters wouldn't know, and neither would my daughter." The thought of my daughter overwhelmed me with sadness, and I couldn't hold back the tears. There on death's door, I didn't have any family, any brothers or sisters by my side. It was more painful the more I thought about it, and all I could do was call out to God. Then I heard those two prisoners say, "What if she really does die in here?" To which the other responded, "Take whichever bedcover is the dirtiest and rattiest, roll her up in it, then throw her into a pit and bury her." Hearing this really weakened my spirit. I was already physically unable to take it anymore, and with the extreme emotional misery and despair on top of that, I was feeling even more cardiac pain—I felt like death would be better than that. I didn't know what to say to God, so I just called on God urgently, "God, save me! Please help me! Give me faith and courage so I can overcome this. Oh God, I don't know what's going to happen after this, but I know my life and death are in Your hands." Just then, a quote from God's words floated up into my mind: **"During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). I was really encouraged, and felt like God Himself was by my side, comforting me and urging me on. I also thought of all those saints through the ages who were martyred for the sake of spreading God's gospel, and even today, so many brothers and

sisters have given up their lives to spread God's kingdom gospel. Their deaths have meaning and value, and they're commemorated by God. I was arrested for believing in God and doing my duty. Even if I were persecuted to death, it would be for the sake of righteousness and would be a thing of glory. Regardless of whether I lived or died that day, I would stand witness for God, and even if I did die, my life wouldn't have been in vain. This thought left me feeling very calm, and not so desolate or helpless anymore. I said another prayer: "God, the specter of death is looming before me. If it does come, I'm ready to submit to Your arrangements. If I live through this, I'll still do the duty of a created being to satisfy You. I'll hand myself over entirely to You and be devoted until the end." I gained a sense of peace after that prayer. I was no longer constrained by thoughts of death and my physical pain subsided, too. I got through one day that way, then a second day, and then a third.... I still wasn't dead! I knew in my bones that this was entirely God's grace and protection.

The people from the National Security Brigade came to get me for more questioning three days later. I heard the corrections officer hollering my name before the cell door had even opened. My condition was at its worst just then, and as soon as the other prisoners heard that, they all started clamoring, standing up and shouting at once, saying things like, "She's in this state and you're going to question her more? You are absolute savages. Taking her in for questioning when she's been beaten into this state?" There were 60-odd people in there, and more than half of them were speaking out for me, infuriated. The entire cell was thrown into chaos. At this sight, the police decided not to question me. I was moved to the point of tears, so grateful for God's protection. Later even the head prisoner said, "I've been here for two years and I've never seen anything like that." I knew that God was working behind the scenes to watch over me, arranging for people,

events, and things to help me and allow me to dodge that blow. I gave thanks to God!

For a while, I was so racked with full-body pain that I couldn't sleep at night, so I'd ponder God's words. Once, I thought of a hymn called **"Peter's Love of God,"** which is about Peter praying to God when he was at his weakest point: **"O God! Regardless of the time or place, You know that I always remember You. No matter the time or place, You know that I want to love You, but my stature is too small, I am too weak and powerless, my love is too limited, and my sincerity toward You is too meager. Compared to Your love, I am simply unfit to live. I wish only that my life is not in vain, and that I can not only repay Your love, but, moreover, that I can devote all I have to You. If I can satisfy You, then as a creature, I shall have peace of mind, and will ask for nothing more. Although I am weak and powerless now, I will not forget Your exhortations, and I will not forget Your love"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). That hymn was incredibly touching for me. Throughout that experience of being mercilessly tortured, whenever I prayed and leaned on God when I felt fragile and in pain, He enlightened and guided me with His words and opened up a way out for me. God had stayed by my side, watching over and protecting me. Experiencing that kind of environment showed me God's almightiness and rule, and then my faith in God grew. I also truly saw the great red dragon's demonic essence of opposing God and destroying people—I rejected and forsook it from the heart, and turned my heart toward God. God saved me from Satan's forces in such practical ways. Full of gratitude for God, I said a prayer that whether I lived or died, I was ready to give my whole life to Him and accept whatever He arranged. Even if it meant my death, I would follow God until the very end! From that moment forward, I

could feel within my heart that I could do without anything—what I couldn't do is be apart from God. As I thought over God's words, I could feel my heart growing closer to Him. Under God's care and protection, the swelling went down around my injuries very quickly, my heart didn't hurt as much when I breathed, and after a week I was able to walk by propping myself up against the wall. Everyone in the prison was amazed, saying, "Look at that, she must believe in the true God!" I knew that was all thanks to God's great power, and that He had brought me back from the brink of death and given me a second life. I gave heartfelt thanks for God's salvation for me!

After four months locked up in the detention house, the Communist Party sentenced me to a year of reeducation through labor for disrupting social order. When I was discharged, the police warned me, "If you get arrested for more religious activities, you'll get a heavy sentence." But I wasn't held back by them. I prayed to God in my heart, "No matter how much oppression or hardship I face after this, I will follow You forever!"

36. Listening to God's Voice and Welcoming the Lord

By Louis, South Korea

Almighty God says: **“Many people may not care what I say, but I still want to tell every so-called saint who follows Jesus that, when you see Jesus descend from the heaven upon a white cloud with your own eyes, this will be the public appearance of the Sun of righteousness. Perhaps that will be a time of great excitement for you, yet you should know that the time when you witness Jesus descend from the heaven is also the time when you go down to hell to be punished. That will be the time of the end of God’s management plan and it will be when God rewards the good and punishes the wicked. For the judgment of God will have ended before man sees signs, when there is only the expression of truth. Those who accept the truth and do not seek signs, and thus have been purified, shall have returned before the throne of God and entered the Creator’s embrace. Only those who persist in the belief that ‘The Jesus who does not ride upon a white cloud is a false Christ’ shall be subjected to everlasting punishment, for they only believe in the Jesus who exhibits signs, but do not acknowledge the Jesus who proclaims severe judgment and releases the true way and life. And so it can only be that Jesus deals with them when He openly returns upon a white cloud”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew). Almighty God’s words reveal that the greatest mistake shared by believers in welcoming the Lord is clinging to the words of the Bible and waiting for Him to come on a cloud as they imagine. Even when they hear that He’s returned, that He is expressing truths and doing the judgment work in the last days, they don’t

investigate or try to listen for God's voice. As a result, they miss out on their chance to be taken up into the kingdom of heaven by the Lord. When the day comes that people do see the Lord Jesus come down on a cloud, God's work of cleansing and saving mankind will already be done. They'll be punished, weeping and gnashing their teeth. Clinging to their own notions and imaginings without seeking the truth or listening for God's voice is so dangerous! Stuck in these sorts of notions and imaginings, I nearly missed my chance to welcome the Lord.

I used to be a preacher in a house church. By 1996, I felt empty and could not get any sustenance, so I often traveled to listen to other sermons. One time, I heard someone say that Eastern Lightning was bearing witness that the Lord Jesus had returned in the flesh, that He was expressing truths and doing the judgment work of the last days, and quite a few brothers and sisters had already joined Eastern Lightning. I was really taken aback, and thought, "The Lord has returned? How could that be possible? It says in the Bible: 'You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven' (Acts 1:11). The Lord should return as His resurrected spiritual body on a cloud, appearing to us openly. Since we haven't seen anything like that, how could anyone say He's come back? The part about God's work of judgment in the flesh is even less believable." So, I never listened to or looked into the sermons of Eastern Lightning.

One day, Brother Weston from our church invited a couple of other preachers. He said their sermons had the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and we could all learn something. I was thrilled and invited the other brothers and sisters to attend. In the gathering, Sisters Leila and Zoe integrated the Bible into their fellowship on the meaning of God's work in the Ages of

Law and Grace, and the mystery of God's names. They talked about how we're living in a vicious cycle of sinning and confessing, how we're filthy and corrupt and unfit to see the Lord. They also said the Bible prophesied the Lord would judge and cleanse mankind when He returns in the last days to resolve our sinful nature. That's the only way for us to be totally free of sin and worthy of the kingdom of heaven. Just like the Lord Jesus said: **"I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth"** (John 16:12–13). **"For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejects Me, and receives not My words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day"** (John 12:47–48). The sisters' fellowship was very enlightening. I'd never heard anything like it in my over ten years of faith. I needed to hear more, so I invited them into my home to share more fellowship. One evening, Leila spoke of Almighty God's words, **"The Seven Thunders Peal—Prophecy That the Gospel of the Kingdom Shall Spread Throughout the Universe."** She testified that the Lord Jesus had returned as Almighty God, Christ of the last days. Particularly when I heard God's words mention **"the lightning flashes straight from East to West,"** I realized this was Eastern Lightning. I was shocked but also disappointed. How could that be the case? I hadn't heard such enlightening sermons for years. I'd been delighted, thinking I'd found the Holy Spirit's work and could finally gain the living water's sustenance. I'd never imagined it would turn out to be Eastern Lightning! It's written in the Bible that the Lord will return on a cloud, so He should take us straight up into heaven. How could they say the Lord had returned in the flesh? I didn't want to hear another word. If I let them lead me astray, I figured everything I'd endured over my years of faith would have been in vain. I just wanted to usher them out. But

then again, over about two weeks with them, I'd seen they lived out really good humanity. It was the dead of winter, so cold, and past midnight. I felt just rushing them out would be so inhumane. I was really conflicted. It was like an internal tug-of-war—I didn't know what God's will was. I made some excuse to go back into my bedroom where I kneeled before the Lord in prayer: "Oh Lord, there really is light in these sisters' fellowship, but I'm afraid of being misled. I'm so lost. I don't know what I should do. Lord, please guide me." I remembered after praying that the Lord Jesus taught us to treat people with love. Kicking them out wouldn't be in line with the Lord's will. Even though I let them stay, facing those two sisters was overwhelming for me. I knew their fellowship was enlightening and came from the Holy Spirit's work, but their fellowship that God had returned in the flesh was so at odds with my own notions. It occurred to me that I could just raise my question with them and see what they said. So I asked them: "You testify that the Lord Jesus has returned in the flesh. I can't really accept this. It's clearly written in the Bible: 'You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven' (Acts 1:11). It was the Lord Jesus' spiritual body that ascended to heaven after His resurrection, so it should be His spiritual body that comes back down on a cloud when He returns. How can you say that He's returned in the flesh?"

Leila patiently responded, "There are a number of biblical prophecies about the Lord returning in the flesh. The Lord Jesus said: '**As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even to the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be**' (Matthew 24:27). '**Be you also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes**' (Matthew 24:44). '**For as the lightning, that lightens out of the one part under heaven,**

shines to the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation' (Luke 17:24-25). In the Lord Jesus' prophecies about His return, He mentioned **'the Son of man comes,' 'the coming of the Son of man,'** and **'the Son of man in His day'** a number of times. **'The Son of man'** means One who is born of man and possesses normal humanity. If He were in spiritual form, He wouldn't be called the Son of man. Jehovah God was in spiritual form, so He couldn't be called the Son of man. Angels are spirits, so they can't be called the Son of man. The Lord Jesus was called Christ, the Son of man, because He was God's Spirit become flesh and He was the Son of man possessed of normal humanity. So when the Lord Jesus said **'the coming of the Son of man'** and **'the Son of man comes,'** it was a reference to the Lord returning in the flesh in the last days."

Then Zoe said, "The Lord Jesus prophesied His own return: **'But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.'** God has appeared and performs His work in the flesh as the Son of man in the last days. Just like the Lord Jesus Christ, He looks like a regular son of man from the outside. People don't recognize Him as Christ and treat Him as an ordinary person. Those in the religious world and those part of Satan's regime also in particular band together to condemn and resist Christ of the last days. This perfectly fulfills the Lord's prophecy: **'But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.'** If it were like human ideas and the Lord came in His spiritual form in the last days, appearing on a cloud with all glory and openly showing Himself to all peoples, everyone would fall before Him, bowing down and worshiping Him, and no one would oppose Him. Then how would this prophecy be fulfilled?"

This helped me begin to understand that if the Lord did appear directly in His spiritual form in the last days, everyone who saw Him would fall to the ground, and no one would go against Him. Then this prophecy: **“But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation,”** couldn’t possibly be fulfilled. I thought about how Eastern Lightning is testifying that the Lord Jesus has returned and the religious world and CCP government are throwing everything into resisting and condemning it. Doesn’t that fulfill the Lord’s prophecy of being rejected of this generation? Could Almighty God really be the Lord Jesus returned? The Bible really does prophesy the coming of the Son of man, but there were still some things I didn’t get. The Lord also said: **“Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him”** (Revelation 1:7). I wondered how that prophecy could be fulfilled if the Lord did return in incarnate form as the Son of man. So I told them about my confusion.

Leila shared this fellowship: “The Lord is faithful. Every single word of His will be fulfilled. It’s just a matter of time. There are a lot of biblical prophecies about the Lord’s return. Besides Him coming on a cloud, there are also prophecies about Him becoming flesh and coming in secret. For example, the Lord said: **‘And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet him’** (Matthew 25:6). **‘But of that day and hour knows no man, not the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but My Father only’** (Matthew 24:36). And there’s the prophecy in Revelation: **‘Behold, I come as a thief’** (Revelation 16:15). In the prophecies mentioning **‘as a thief,’ ‘at midnight there was a cry made,’** and **‘knows no man,’** He was talking about returning in secret. The Lord comes in two different ways in the last days. He incarnates in secret as the Son of man, and He also comes openly on a cloud. That is, He first comes in the flesh in secret to

express the truth and judge and cleanse mankind, and to make a group of overcomers before the disasters. Once God in the flesh has finished His work of saving mankind in secret, the disasters will befall, and He'll reward the good and punish the evil. Only then will God come openly on a cloud, revealing Himself to all nations and peoples. That's when the prophecies of the Lord coming openly will be completely fulfilled. All who accept Almighty God's work of judgment, who are cleansed of their corrupt dispositions will be protected by God and saved from the disasters. They'll get into God's kingdom. But those who reject Almighty God's work of the last days, who do all they can to oppose and condemn it, will be punished in the disasters, weeping and gnashing their teeth. This will fulfill this prophecy in Revelation: **'Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him'** (Revelation 1:7)." Then she read a passage of Almighty God's words for me: **"Many people may not care what I say, but I still want to tell every so-called saint who follows Jesus that, when you see Jesus descend from the heaven upon a white cloud with your own eyes, this will be the public appearance of the Sun of righteousness. Perhaps that will be a time of great excitement for you, yet you should know that the time when you witness Jesus descend from the heaven is also the time when you go down to hell to be punished. That will be the time of the end of God's management plan and it will be when God rewards the good and punishes the wicked. For the judgment of God will have ended before man sees signs, when there is only the expression of truth. Those who accept the truth and do not seek signs, and thus have been purified, shall have returned before the throne of God and entered the Creator's embrace. Only those who persist in the belief that 'The Jesus who does not ride upon a white**

cloud is a false Christ' shall be subjected to everlasting punishment, for they only believe in the Jesus who exhibits signs, but do not acknowledge the Jesus who proclaims severe judgment and releases the true way and life. And so it can only be that Jesus deals with them when He openly returns upon a white cloud. They are too stubborn, too confident in themselves, too arrogant. How could such degenerates be rewarded by Jesus? The return of Jesus is a great salvation for those who are capable of accepting the truth, but for those who are unable to accept the truth it is a sign of condemnation. You should choose your own path, and should not blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and reject the truth. You should not be an ignorant and arrogant person, but someone who obeys the guidance of the Holy Spirit and longs for and seeks the truth; only in this way will you benefit" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew).

My eyes were suddenly opened. I saw that the Lord's return happens in stages. First, He becomes flesh and speaks and works in secret, and then He comes openly on a cloud, appearing to all peoples. I saw that I'd been delimiting the Lord's coming to just the last way because of my notions and imaginings. The idea that He couldn't possibly come in the flesh was wrong. I couldn't keep insisting on that anymore. I thought of these words from the Lord Jesus: **"For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened"** (Matthew 7:8). Now faced with the Lord's return, I had to have a God-fearing heart and seriously investigate this to meet the Lord's will. Otherwise, I'd probably be cast out by the Lord!

Then I asked them, “Since the Lord first becomes flesh to work in secret when He returns, how can we be sure Almighty God is God in the flesh, Christ of the last days?” Leila responded very happily, “For thousands of years, no one has understood the mysteries, the truths about what the incarnation is and how we can know God in the flesh. Now Almighty God has unveiled all of these mysteries and truths to us.” Then she read a few passages of Almighty God’s words to me: **“The ‘incarnation’ is God’s appearance in the flesh; God works among created mankind in the image of the flesh. So for God to be incarnated, He must first be flesh, flesh with normal humanity; this is the most basic prerequisite. In fact, the implication of God’s incarnation is that God lives and works in the flesh, that God in His very essence becomes flesh, becomes a man”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Essence of the Flesh Inhabited by God). **“Incarnation means that God’s Spirit becomes a flesh, that is, God becomes flesh; the work that the flesh does is the work of the Spirit, which is realized in the flesh, expressed by the flesh. No one except God’s flesh can fulfill the ministry of the incarnate God; that is, only God’s incarnate flesh, this normal humanity—and no one else—can express the divine work”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Essence of the Flesh Inhabited by God). **“The incarnate God is called Christ, and Christ is the flesh donned by the Spirit of God. This flesh is unlike any man that is of the flesh. This difference is because Christ is not of flesh and blood; He is the incarnation of the Spirit. He has both a normal humanity and a complete divinity. His divinity is not possessed by any man. His normal humanity sustains all His normal activities in the flesh, while His divinity carries out the work of God Himself”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Essence of Christ Is Obedience to the Will of the Heavenly Father). **“He who is God incarnate shall possess the essence of**

God, and He who is God incarnate shall possess the expression of God. Since God becomes flesh, He shall bring forth the work He intends to do, and since God becomes flesh, He shall express what He is, and shall be able to bring the truth to man, bestow life upon him, and point the way for him. Flesh that does not have the essence of God is decidedly not the incarnate God; of this there is no doubt. If man intends to inquire into whether it is God's incarnate flesh, then he must corroborate this from the disposition He expresses and the words He speaks. Which is to say, to corroborate whether or not it is God's incarnate flesh, and whether or not it is the true way, one must discriminate on the basis of His essence. And so, in determining whether it is the flesh of God incarnate, the key lies in His essence (His work, His utterances, His disposition, and many other aspects), rather than external appearance. If man scrutinizes only His external appearance, and as a result overlooks His essence, this shows that man is benighted and ignorant" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Preface).

Leila continued her fellowship after reading Almighty God's words. "Christ is God in the flesh. He is God's Spirit clothed in flesh who has become a normal person, working and uttering words among man. God incarnate looks like a regular person, not lofty or supernatural. He has all the reason, thinking, and emotions of a normal person. He eats, sleeps, and wears clothing just like a normal person, and He lives among people and interacts with them in a very real way. But aside from normal humanity, He also possesses a divine essence, which people don't have. That's why Christ can do God's own work. He can end an old age and begin a new one. His essence is the truth, the way, and the life. He can express the truth, and guide and sustain people anywhere, anytime—He can give us a path of

practice. Christ can also reveal mysteries, express God's disposition, what He has and is, and His almightiness and wisdom. Christ's words can accomplish all. There's no human who can do this. The Lord Jesus looked like an ordinary man, but He had a divine essence. His appearance and work started the Age of Grace and ended the Age of Law. He expressed the truth, gave us the way of repentance, and forgave our sins. He was tolerant and patient, and told us to forgive seventy times seven times. He showed God's disposition of lovingkindness and mercy. He also showed many signs and wonders while He worked, like healing the blind, making the lame walk, quieting the seas with a word, raising the dead, feeding 5,000 people with five loaves and two fishes, and more. This fully revealed God's authority and power. The Lord Jesus' work and words and the disposition He expressed were adequate proof that He was God in the flesh. Only God can express the truth, end an old age and begin a new one, express God's disposition and the wisdom of His work. Besides Christ, no one can express the truth, express what God has and is, or complete God's own work. This is also how we can determine whether Almighty God is God in the flesh, Christ of the last days. It's not based on what He looks like, what sort of family He was born into, what His social status is, or whether He has any prestige. None of that matters. What's most important is seeking and investigating Almighty God's work and words, seeing if He can express the truth and do the work of God. If He expresses the truth and God's disposition, if He does God's work to save mankind, then though He may appear very ordinary without any particular status or power, and in spite of people's condemnation and rejection, He is God in the flesh. He is Christ."

Through her fellowship, I understood better that God in the flesh can express the truth and do God's work. That's the only basis for determining if someone is Christ. Zoe continued the fellowship: "In confirming whether

Almighty God is God in the flesh, we can't just look at appearances. We have to be sure from His words, His work, and the disposition He expresses. In the last days, Almighty God is expressing truths and doing the work of judgment beginning with the house of God on the foundation of the Lord Jesus' work of redemption. He's ended the Age of Grace and ushered in the Age of Kingdom. Almighty God has uttered millions of words. He's unveiled the mystery of God's 6,000-year management plan, the mystery of His three stages of work, the mystery of God's incarnation and the inside story of the Bible. He's revealed how Satan corrupts mankind, how God saves mankind, how God does the work of judging and cleansing people in the last days, how He sorts people according to their kind and determines people's end and destination, and more. Almighty God expresses His disposition that is principally righteous, judging and exposing our satanic nature of opposing God and our corrupt dispositions. He shows us the path to cast off sin and be cleansed, too." Zoe also shared her own experience of being judged and chastised through God's words. She said, "I didn't see how arrogant, selfish, and cunning I was until I was judged, chastised, tested, refined, dealt with, and pruned through God's words. I had faith and expended myself for God, but I still sinned and resisted God all the time because of my satanic nature. For example, I always loved to show off and have people look up to me. I would haughtily scold others and have them do what I said. I lied and deceived others to protect my own name and status. The list goes on. Through the judgment and chastisement of God's words, I saw that I was living by my satanic disposition and totally lacked a human likeness. I also realized that His righteous disposition tolerates no offense and I began to have some fear of Him in my heart. I also developed regret and self-hatred, and started to focus on practicing the truth to resolve my satanic disposition and truly repented to God. There was some gradual

change in my corrupt disposition. The achievements of Almighty God's work and words are enough to be certain that He is God incarnate, that He is Christ of the last days."

The sisters' fellowship brightened my heart. I saw that the key to confirming the Son of man's appearance, and confirming Him to be Christ in the flesh is to see whether He can express God's words and disposition, and whether He can perform work to end the old age and start the new one. Almighty God has expressed so many truths and is doing the work to judge and cleanse mankind. He's begun the Age of Kingdom and ended the Age of Grace. Surely that means He's Christ, the return of the Lord! I never understood the truth before. I just blindly waited for the Lord to come on a cloud in His spiritual form and then take believers straight up into the kingdom of heaven, so I didn't bother to seek or investigate when I heard He'd already returned. I nearly lost my chance to be reunited with the Lord. What a fool I was!

After that, I avidly read Almighty God's words. I learned lots of truths and mysteries I'd never understood before, and became absolutely certain that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned! I shared Almighty God's work of the last days with over 100 brothers and sisters within my network. When they read His words and heard His voice, they were moved to tears of joy. They turned to Almighty God and accepted His work of the last days, and attended the feast of the Lamb!

37. What's Behind Not Taking a Stand

By Kelly, South Korea

Some time ago, I was very inefficient in my duty. Every time I did a video project, I always modified it many times. This seriously affected the overall progress of work. At first, I thought it was because I lacked my own opinions—every time my brothers and sisters suggested some revisions, I didn't evaluate whether they were needed based on principles, and simply made whatever changes they suggested. Some suggestions were not very reasonable, which resulted in constant rework. Later, after being pruned and dealt with and reflecting on myself according to what God's word reveals, I realized there were satanic dispositions and despicable intentions behind my lack of assertiveness.

That was several months ago. Then, there were some brothers and sisters who were arrogant and self-righteous, always insisting on their own views and unable to accept the suggestions of others, which seriously affected the progress of work. Our leader fellowshiped to expose them several times, but they still didn't change and were dismissed. Seeing them dismissed, I secretly warned myself, "When brothers and sisters give me suggestions in the future, I can't just insist on my own views." After that, when everyone gave suggestions for revising a video, I almost always adopted them, even though some of them were small issues that didn't really need to be changed. I actually thought some of those suggestions weren't in line with principles, and that some were even the most trivial of issues, but I worried, "If I don't make this revision, what will my supervisor and brothers and sisters think of me? Will they think I am arrogant and unable to take other people's advice? If I give them a bad impression that I can't accept the truth, then my dismissal will be imminent. Besides, I'm not

entirely sure about my opinions. If I'm wrong and don't make a needed change, if that problem is found after the video went online, then it will be me who bears the responsibility." After thinking about it, to be on the safe side, I accepted all the suggestions and made new revisions. Sometimes there were different suggestions for a single issue, so I made multiple versions and asked my supervisor to decide which was best, or while our team was discussing work, I talked it over with my brothers and sisters and we finalized the decision together. I thought, "My supervisor and the majority of brothers and sisters made this decision. This is the majority opinion, so there shouldn't be any big problems. This is the most secure way. If something goes wrong in the future, it's not my responsibility alone." Sometimes, I received a lot of suggestions, and I wasn't sure how to make revisions, so I sought out the supervisor and had her help me decide which direction to take. Sometimes I heard too much advice, and in the end, I didn't know what effect should be presented, which led to the duty being performed very inefficiently. In work discussions, my constant requests for my brothers and sisters to help me make decisions took time away from them in their duties and slowed the overall progress of work.

Once, I was making a video background image. It needed to reflect the suffering state of people living in sin, so I made the image with a dark tone with backlighting. Some brothers and sisters thought it was too dark and unattractive, and suggested I brighten the picture a bit and add some light and shadow effects. I was hesitant about these suggestions. Given the theme, having the image too bright didn't conform to the overall atmosphere of people living in darkness, and adding brightness would violate objective laws, so I didn't think the suggestion was reasonable. But then I thought, since several people had made this suggestion, if I didn't do it, and it impacted the effect of the video after it went online, it would be

my responsibility. As I was struggling with this, I saw that the leader also agreed with the revision, so I started to compromise. If I put forward my view and disagreed with the revision, would everyone think I was insisting on my own view? Would they think I was making excuses not to change it because it was troublesome? So I decided to just modify it. If there was a problem, it wouldn't be my responsibility alone, because I made the change based on everyone's suggestions. I clearly felt this change was inappropriate, but still spent a lot of time modifying the whole image. I was shocked when, once I finished, the supervisor evaluated it based on relevant principles and its real effect after revision, saying it didn't accord with objective facts, and that I had to change it back. She also said I had been passive in my duties recently, that I had no opinions about others' suggestions and was hindering the progress of work, and she asked me to reflect on myself. I couldn't calm myself for a long time, and felt very sad and guilty. I had spent so much time modifying the image, and now I had to change it back, which indeed delayed the progress of work. I realized that during this period, every time I faced different suggestions, I actually had my own opinions, but to prevent people calling me arrogant, I didn't speak up when I had those opinions. When I faced uncertainty over a problem, I didn't seek the truth principles, I just waited for others to make the final decision, always doing things according to other people's orders. Performing my duty this way really was too passive, and it had delayed the work of the church. I came before God and prayed to ask Him to guide me in reflecting on and knowing myself.

In my seeking and pondering, I read God's word: **"Those who can perform a duty in God's house must be people whose burden is the work of the church, who take responsibility, who uphold the truth principles, and who can suffer and pay the price. If one is lacking in**

these areas, they are unfit to perform a duty, and they do not possess the conditions for the performance of duty. There are many people who are afraid of taking on responsibility in performing a duty. Their fear manifests in three main ways. The first is that they choose duties that do not require taking on responsibility. If a church leader arranges for them to perform a duty, they first ask whether they must take on responsibility for it: If so, they do not accept it. If it does not require them to take on responsibility and to be responsible for it, they accept it reluctantly, but still must see whether the work is tiring or bothersome, and despite their reluctant acceptance of the duty, they are unmotivated to perform it well, preferring still to be careless and perfunctory. Leisure, no labor, and no bodily hardship—this is their principle. The second is that when a difficulty befalls them or they encounter a problem, their first resort is to report it to a leader and have the leader handle and resolve it, in hope that they may keep their ease. They do not care how the leader handles the issue and pay this no mind—so long as they are not responsible themselves, then all is well to them. Is such performance of duty loyal to God? This is called passing the buck, dereliction of duty, playing tricks. It is all talk; they are not doing anything real. They say to themselves, ‘If this thing is mine to sort out, what if I end up making a mistake? When they look into who’s to blame, won’t they handle me? Won’t the responsibility for it fall first to me?’ This is what they worry about. But do you believe that God scrutinizes all? Everyone makes mistakes. If a person whose intention is correct lacks experience and has not handled some sort of matter before, but they have done their best, that is visible to God. You must believe that God scrutinizes all things and the heart of man. If one does not even believe this, are they not a nonbeliever? What significance

could there be in such a person performing a duty? It doesn't really matter whether they perform this duty or not, does it? They are afraid of taking responsibility and they shirk responsibility. When something happens, the first thing they do isn't try to think of a way to handle the problem, rather the first thing they do is call and notify the leader. Of course, some people try to handle the problem themselves as they notify the leader, but some people don't do this, and the first thing they do is call the leader, and after the call, they just wait passively, awaiting instructions. When the leader instructs them to take a step, they take a step; if the leader says to do something, they do it. If the leader doesn't say anything or give instructions, they don't do anything and just procrastinate. Without anyone spurring them on or supervising them they don't do any work at all. Tell Me, is such a person doing a duty? Even if they are doing service, they have no loyalty! There is one more way in which a person's fear of taking on responsibility manifests. When they perform their duty, some people do just a bit of superficial, simple work, work that does not entail taking on responsibility. Work that entails difficulties and taking on responsibility, they dump onto others, and if something should go wrong, they shift the blame onto those people and keep their own noses clean. When church leaders see that they are irresponsible, they patiently offer help, or they prune and deal with them, so that they may be able to take responsibility. But still, they do not want to, and they think, 'This duty is hard to perform. I'll have to take responsibility when things go wrong, and I may even be cleared out and cast out, and that will be the end for me.' What kind of attitude is this? If they have no sense of responsibility in performing their duty, how can they perform their duty well? Those who don't genuinely expend themselves for God can't perform any duty well, and

those who fear taking responsibility will only delay things when they perform their duties. Such people are not trustworthy or dependable; they only perform their duty to get food in their mouths. Should ‘beggars’ like this be cast out? They should. The house of God does not want such people” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)).

God’s word revealed my state. I thought back on my performance of my duties during this period. When I had received so many suggestions, I had realized that some of them weren’t appropriate. Some revisions were against principles, and some were unnecessary. But I feared that if I did not listen to everyone’s advice and something went wrong, I would have to bear the blame alone. I also feared that sticking to my point of view would give people the bad impression that I was arrogant and self-righteous, so I catered to everyone’s opinions, made whatever changes others suggested, and I even revised things repeatedly and made multiple versions, waiting for the supervisor and my brothers and sisters to decide. I never sought the truth principles or made my own decisions for fear of taking the blame. I thought doing things this way was safer, because once things were a group decision, problems were less likely, and even if there was a problem, I wouldn’t be alone. Outwardly, I was always busy with my duties, but actually, I was considering my own interests in everything and considering how to protect myself and avoid responsibility. Wasn’t I just playing tricks like this? Doing my duty this way was only offering up my labor and doing what I was told. I was never diligent, nor did I take responsibility in my duty. I didn’t consider the work of the church at all and truly lacked all humanity. Those who sincerely perform their duties consider the interests of the church in all things, and when faced with matters they can’t understand, they seek God’s will, seek the truth principles, and are of one heart with God in their duties. But me? I

was absolutely insincere and mindless in my duty. I was like hired help, just waiting to be ordered to do something. I never sought to resolve problems with the truth. Performing my duty like this, I had nothing to do with God or the truth. I was only superficially going through the motions, not even on par with a service-doer.

I recalled another passage of God's word: **“What is the standard by which a person's actions and behavior are judged to be good or evil? It is whether or not they, in their thoughts, outpourings, and actions, possess the testimony of putting the truth into practice and of living out the truth reality. If you do not have this reality or live this out, then without doubt, you are an evildoer. How does God regard evildoers? To God, your thoughts and external acts do not bear testimony for Him, nor do they humiliate and defeat Satan; instead, they bring shame to Him, and they are riddled with marks of the dishonor that you have brought upon Him. You are not testifying for God, you are not expending yourself for God, nor are you fulfilling your responsibilities and obligations to God; instead, you are acting for your own sake. What does ‘for your own sake’ mean? To be precise, it means for Satan's sake. Therefore, in the end, God will say, ‘Depart from Me, you that work iniquity.’ In God's eyes, your actions will not be seen as good deeds, they will be considered evil deeds. Not only will they fail to gain God's approval—they will be condemned. What does one hope to gain from such a belief in God? Would such belief not come to naught in the end?”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). From God's words I understood that He observes everyone's hearts. He doesn't look at how much work we do or how much suffering we endure. He instead looks at whether people's intentions in their duties are for God or for themselves and

whether they have testimony of practicing the truth in their duties. If duties are performed only to satisfy oneself, this is wickedness in God's eyes, and God detests it. Through God's word, I saw that my thoughts as I performed my duty were for myself. To avoid taking responsibility, I would fix things that didn't matter, no matter how much time it took, even making repeated revisions without care for delays in the progress of work. I went against my own will to make revisions on the basis of suggestions I clearly knew were inappropriate, and, as a result, the quality of the videos declined. I delayed the work, but I never felt concerned or a sense of urgency, nor did I try to increase efficiency by seeking the truth principles. All I was doing in my duty was following procedures and going through the motions, and I thought as long as I finished the revision and everyone approved, it was fine. My irresponsible behavior wasn't performing my duty at all, and it was not accruing good deeds. It was wickedness. To protect my own interests, I repeatedly hindered the work of the church. I was only acting as Satan's servant and disrupting the church's work! Thinking on this, I felt terrified. I quickly prayed to God, asking for His guidance in changing my attitude toward my duty.

After that, when I encountered all kinds of suggestions in my duty, I first came before God to pray and seek, analyzed which suggested changes were necessary and which weren't, and considered how to improve my efficiency to create better results. For suggested changes that weren't necessary, I presented my opinions on the basis of principles I understood, sought and fellowshiped with everyone, and reached a consensus. Practicing like this made me a bit more efficient in my duty. I thought I had some change and entry in this aspect, but faced with things that might entail taking on responsibility, I fell back into my old ways.

Once, I made a video vignette, and everyone had different opinions on some details about the image. After we discussed and communicated, we still hadn't decided how to modify it, and we were stuck for quite a long time. Actually, I knew that for a vignette, as long as it looks good and the content of the image doesn't violate objective reality, there is no need to get stuck on details. But after hearing so many different suggestions, I didn't know what to do, "If I change things based on my own ideas, what will happen if there is a problem after the video is uploaded? Then it will be my responsibility." I was afraid to be responsible for making a mistake, so I again made multiple versions based on everyone's suggestions and waited for everyone to give me a final decision. In the end, however, no one gave me a clear answer. As I watched the days pass, I became very anxious. Wasn't I delaying the progress of the video again? I asked myself, "Why is it so difficult to make a decision? Why does it feel like my hands are bound and I can't untie them?" So, I came before God to pray and seek, and asked God to guide me in reflecting and knowing myself.

Later, I read God's word: **"You must be an honest person, you must have a sense of responsibility when you face problems, and you must find ways to seek the truth to resolve problems. Do not be a treacherous person. If you shirk responsibility and wash your hands of it when problems arise, even unbelievers will condemn you, not to mention God's house! This is condemned and cursed by God and God's chosen people despise and reject such behavior. God loves honest people, but hates deceitful and slippery people. If you are a treacherous person and attempt to play tricks, will God not hate you? Will God's house simply let you off the hook? Sooner or later, you will be held accountable. God likes honest people and dislikes treacherous people. Everyone should understand this clearly, and stop being confused and doing foolish**

things. Momentary ignorance is understandable, but refusing to accept the truth at all is just obstinacy. Honest people can take responsibility. They do not consider their own gains and losses, they just safeguard the work and interests of God's house. They have kind and honest hearts that are like bowls of clear water that one can see the bottom of at a glance. There is also transparency in their actions. A deceitful person always plays tricks, always disguises things, covers up, and wraps themselves up so tightly that no one can see through them. People can't see through your inner thoughts, but God can see the deepest things in your heart. If God sees that you are not an honest person, that you are slippery, that you never accept the truth, that you are always trying to deceive Him, and that you do not hand your heart over to Him, then God will not like you, He will hate and abandon you. Those who prosper among the unbelievers, who are silver-tongued and quick-witted, what kind of people are they? Is this clear to you? What is their essence? It can be said that they are all extraordinarily shrewd, they are all extremely deceitful and treacherous, they are the genuine devil Satan. Could God save someone such as this? God hates nothing more than devils—people who are deceitful and treacherous. God absolutely will not save such people, so whatever you do, do not be this kind of person. Those who are quick-witted and consider all the angles when they speak, who are smooth and slick and look to see which way the wind blows when they deal with matters—I tell you, God loathes these people the most, people like this are beyond saving. When people are deceitful and treacherous, no matter how nice their words may sound, they are still deceptive lies. The nicer their words sound, the more they are the devil Satan. These are exactly the kind of people that God despises most. What do you say: Can people who are deceitful, good at

lying and smooth-tongued receive the work of the Holy Spirit? Can they receive the illumination and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit? Absolutely not. What is God's attitude toward people who are deceitful and treacherous? He detests and rejects them, He sidelines them and pays them no heed, He regards them as of the same class as animals. In God's eyes, such people are merely wearing human skin; in their essence, they are of the same kind as the devil Satan, they are walking corpses, and God will never save them" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (8)).

God's word revealed my state. I was always indecisive when confronted with different suggestions, afraid to take responsibility for mistakes, and always tried to protect myself, because I was controlled by satanic poisons like "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes," and "The law cannot be enforced when everyone is an offender." When faced with others' suggestions, I had my own opinions, but I didn't put them forward and seek in time. Sometimes when I found the suggestions of others were inappropriate, I still stubbornly insisted on acting upon them in order to protect myself. In this way, if there were problems, they wouldn't be my responsibility and I wouldn't be dealt with. Outwardly, I appeared receptive to other people's advice, and that I could take and implement suggestions, which presented the illusion that I wasn't arrogant and could accept the truth. Actually, behind this were my own despicable intentions. I thought back on how I had behaved, and how each time I might be responsible for something, I looked out for myself. Sometimes, when others had problems and asked for my advice, I would first analyze their thoughts and opinions, and if these agreed with mine, I used them as a basis and added my own advice, but if their opinions were different, I didn't want to share my own,

because I feared if I was wrong and problems arose, I would have to take responsibility, so I just said something vague and perfunctory. Living by these satanic life philosophies, I had become especially cunning and deceitful, I could never clearly put forward my own points of view, I had no principles or position, and I spoke and acted in ways that confused people and made my own views inscrutable. I even thought it was smart to do this so I wouldn't have to bear any consequences, I wouldn't be pruned and dealt with or dismissed. I had no idea that I was playing tricks and scheming on God and on my brothers and sisters, that I was making God loathe and detest me. God doesn't save people like this. I might have been able to deceive my brothers and sisters, but God observed my heart. If I continued to deceive God like this, be irresponsible in my duty, just going through the motions, and not focusing on seeking truth principles, in the end I would never gain any truth, and I would still be eliminated. I saw that I was too smart for my own good. I was truly so ignorant! Only once I realized this did I start to feel afraid. I really wanted to repent to God. I couldn't go on like this.

I read another two passages of God's word: **"In the house of God, you must grasp the principle of every duty you perform, no matter what it is, and be able to practice the truth. That is what it is to be principled. If something is not clear to you, if you are not sure what the appropriate thing to do is, seek out fellowship to achieve consensus. Once it has been determined what is most beneficial to the church's work and to the brothers and sisters, do that. Do not be bound by rules, don't delay, do not wait, do not be a passive observer. If you are always an observer and never have an opinion of your own, if you always wait until someone else has made a decision before doing anything and, when no one has made a decision, just drag your heels and wait, what**

will the consequence be? Every part of the work gets mired down, and nothing gets completed. You should learn to seek the truth, or at least be able to act by your conscience and reason. So long as the appropriate way to do something is clear to you, and a majority of the others think that way is workable, then that is how you should practice. Do not be afraid of taking on responsibility for the thing, or of offending others, or of incurring consequences. If someone does not do anything real, and is always calculating, and afraid of taking responsibility, and does not dare to uphold principles in the things they do, this shows that they are particularly cunning and crafty, and have too many fiendish schemes. How iniquitous it is to wish to enjoy God's grace and blessings and yet do nothing real. There is no one God despises more than such crafty and conniving people. Regardless of what you are thinking, you are not practicing the truth, you have no loyalty, and your own personal considerations are always involved, and you always have your own thoughts and ideas. God watches these things, God knows—did you think God does not know? It is foolish to think this! And if you do not immediately repent, you will lose God's work" (God's Fellowship). "What are the manifestations of an honest person? Firstly, having no doubts about God's words. That is one of the manifestations of an honest person. Apart from this, the most important manifestation is seeking and practicing the truth in all matters—this is most crucial. You say that you are honest, but you always push God's words to the back of your mind and just do whatever you want. Is that the manifestation of an honest person? You say, 'Although my caliber is poor, I have an honest heart.' And yet when a duty falls to you, you are afraid of suffering and bearing responsibility if you do not do it well, so you make excuses to shirk your

duty or suggest that someone else do it. Is this the manifestation of an honest person? Clearly, it is not. How, then, should an honest person behave? They should submit to God's arrangements, be devoted to the duty they are supposed to perform, and strive to satisfy God's will. This manifests itself in several ways: One is accepting your duty with an honest heart, not considering your fleshly interests, not being half-hearted about it, and not plotting for your own benefit. Those are manifestations of honesty. Another is putting all your heart and strength into performing your duty well, doing things properly, and putting your heart and love into your duty to satisfy God. These are the manifestations an honest person should have while performing their duty" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). From God's word, I saw that God loves honest people. It doesn't matter even if we are ignorant and have low caliber. The key is to have a correct and honest heart, not to disguise ourselves, speak openly about what we think, seek and fellowship with others about what we don't understand, act in accordance with principles and to the benefit of the work of the church, and be loyal in our duties. Do this, and God is satisfied. God observes people's hearts. If we try our best, even if we sometimes make mistakes due to low caliber or not understanding the truth, there are still lessons to be learned. As long as we can accept the truth, seek the truth, and sum up problems in time, we will deviate less and less as time goes on, and gradually master the principles and perform our duties well. The church does not condemn people and hold them accountable for one single fault. Once I understood this, I felt much more relieved.

Later, I opened up and fellowshiped with a sister about my state during this period, and she helped me very patiently. Through fellowshiping and seeking the truth together, I changed the mistaken view I had always held.

Previously, I always worried that if I didn't take others' advice and offered differing views and opinions, they would think I was arrogant and didn't accept the truth. Actually, that was because I couldn't differentiate between arrogance and upholding principles. Upholding principles means, through seeking the truth, determining practices that accord with principles and protect the interests of the church, and continuing to uphold them and not compromise when others object or raise issues. Although outwardly it looks somewhat similar to arrogance, this is upholding the truth and is a positive thing. Arrogance is always feeling superior to others, believing one's own opinions and ideas to be correct; when others put forward different points of view, there is an obstinance on one's own way without seeking or contemplation; one simply goes one's own way, and insists that what is wrong is right. All of these opinions come from their own judgment, and have no basis in principle. Yet still, they demand others listen to them and do as they say. This is a satanic disposition, a manifestation of arrogance. I recalled brothers and sisters who were dismissed before. Some of them insisted on their own viewpoints, didn't take the suggestions of their brothers and sisters seriously, seek or contemplate, always argued their own case, and were unwilling to revise and improve. What they insisted on was never in line with principles, it was just their personal thoughts and preferences. This is the manifestation of arrogance. If one can evaluate and determine, according to principles, that the suggestions of others are inappropriate, and raise one's own views, this is not arrogance, it is taking things seriously, and conscientiously assuming responsibility for the work. When one doesn't fully understand a problem, to express their viewpoint in seeking and fellowship with others is not arrogantly insisting on their way, but is seeking principles before action. Once I understood this aspect of truth, I felt a great sense of relief.

Later, when I received many suggestions in my duty, I prayed to God for calm and sought the relevant truth principles, and evaluated whether the revisions were necessary based on principles. I also took the initiative to communicate and discuss my own ideas with everyone. Once, when I finished a video background image, my leader said that the color wasn't suitable and recommended that I change it. I thought, "If I change it based on this suggestion, it will be a serious revision, and it will definitely delay the upload of the video. This isn't really a matter of principle, it's just a personal preference, so there's no need to change it. But if I don't, will my leader feel I am arrogant, self-righteous, and unable to accept other people's suggestions?" When I started to hesitate again, I prayed to ask God to guide me in practicing according to principles. After I prayed, I found some reference materials, and then worked with my leader and supervisor to seek the relevant principles together. I also exchanged my own understanding and views. The leader and supervisor agreed with my point of view, and the video soon went online. I felt especially happy and secure.

Thinking back on my experience during this time, I realized that for the sake of protecting myself and avoiding responsibility, I tied my own hands in my duty with all kinds of worries. Living that way was tiring, and I wasn't very effective. But when I understood God's will and practiced according to the truth principles, problems were easy to solve, and my duty felt much easier and more relaxed. I had truly experienced that in living by satanic life philosophies, I could only ever be more cunning and deceitful, unworthy of people's trust, and displeasing to God. Only by practicing the truth and fulfilling one's duty by the truth principles can one have God's blessing. Only in this way can they feel steadfast and open-hearted, and find joy and peace in their heart.

38. Facing My Son's Terminal Illness

By Liang Xin, China

Two years ago my son suddenly developed an awful pain in his waist. We went to get it checked out, and the doctor said the test results were concerning, that we should go to the larger provincial hospital for further tests. My heart skipped a beat when he said that, and I thought there was a chance my son had a serious illness. But then I thought: “Since becoming a believer I’ve been making sacrifices and doing my duty for God all this time, and I’ve suffered plenty. Even when faced with the frantic oppression and arrests carried out by the Communist Party, and the ridicule and slander of friends and relatives, I have never shrunk back, and stayed strong in my duty. Considering all the sacrifices I’ve made for God, He should protect my son from anything serious.” But the results shocked me. My son had liver cancer and liver cirrhosis. The doctor said he just had three to six more months to live. This diagnosis was a bolt from the blue and I just sat there, paralyzed. I simply couldn’t accept this reality. He was just 37—how could he get something so serious? I was holding the test results, and my hands were shaking. I wondered if the doctor had made the wrong diagnosis. I sat there at the edge of the bed, stunned, and didn’t come to for quite a while. Tears rolled down my face and I thought, “He’s so young—how could he get such a serious disease? Liver cancer and liver cirrhosis? Either one of these would be life-threatening, but two? He is the backbone of our family. What would we all do without him? The most painful thing a person can face in life is burying their child.” I was becoming increasingly miserable. I was constantly on the verge of tears and lived each day in a daze. I was really in darkness. I said a prayer, “God, with my son so seriously ill, I’m

really suffering, and can't manage this. Please enlighten me to understand Your will."

One day, I read this in God's words: **"While undergoing trials, it is normal for people to be weak, or to have negativity within them, or to lack clarity on God's will or their path for practice. But in any case, you must have faith in God's work, and not deny God, just like Job. Although Job was weak and cursed the day of his own birth, he did not deny that all things in human life were bestowed by Jehovah, and that Jehovah is also the One to take them all away. No matter how he was tested, he maintained this belief. ... God does the work of perfection on people, and they cannot see it, cannot feel it; under such circumstances, your faith is required. People's faith is required when something cannot be seen by the naked eye, and your faith is required when you cannot let go of your own notions. When you do not have clarity about God's work, what is required of you is to have faith and to take a firm stance and stand witness"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). From reading God's words I could see that my son getting so seriously ill was a kind of trial and test for me, and that I had to rely on my faith to get through it. I thought of Job, who was robbed of all his wealth and hillsides of livestock, his children all died, and he was covered with boils. Even facing such a great trial, he was ready to curse himself before blaming God, and was still able to praise the name of Jehovah. He eventually bore a beautiful testimony for God. When he was going through all this, his friends mocked him, his wife criticized him, and even urged him to just abandon God and die. On the surface it looked like it was people criticizing him, but behind that, it was Satan tempting Job with people's words to deny and betray God. But Job didn't fall for it, and he even denounced his wife as a foolish woman. At this time, Satan's tricks

were behind my friends' and relatives' attacks. I had to be like Job and stand witness for God. I couldn't listen to their nonsense. At these thoughts I didn't feel quite as miserable and helpless as I had before.

My son got surgery a couple weeks later and his condition started to improve. I thought, "God might have mercy on him because of my faith. I truly hope that God might reveal a miracle and cure his illness. If he made a full recovery, that would be great!" Then this passage of God's words suddenly sprung to mind: **"What you pursue is to be able to gain peace after believing in God, for your children to be free from illness, for your husband to have a good job, for your son to find a good wife, for your daughter to find a decent husband, for your oxen and horses to plow the land well, for a year of good weather for your crops. This is what you seek. Your pursuit is only to live in comfort, for no accidents to befall your family, for the winds to pass you by, for your face to be untouched by grit, for your family's crops to not be flooded, for you to be unaffected by any disaster, to live in God's embrace, to live in a cozy nest. A coward such as you, who always pursues the flesh—do you have a heart, do you have a spirit? Are you not a beast? I give you the true way without asking for anything in return, yet you do not pursue. Are you one of those who believe in God? I bestow real human life upon you, yet you do not pursue. Are you no different from a pig or a dog?"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). God's words really incisively revealed my mistaken perspectives on faith and motives for blessings. I felt really ashamed. When I believed in the Lord, I had been pursuing blessings and grace, hoping my whole family would be blessed because of my belief. Since accepting the work of God in the last days, though I'd never brazenly prayed to God asking for His grace, I wasn't pursuing the truth, and I didn't truly

understand God. In my faith, I held to the view of obtaining blessings that I would “gain a hundredfold in this life, and eternal life in the age to come.” I thought that since I’d made sacrifices for God, He would commemorate and bless me, that He should protect my family from illness and disaster, make our lives smooth, and free of any terrible mishaps. Because of this, I left my job behind to do my duty, totally happy and willing to endure any suffering. But when my son tested positive for cancer, I became constantly mired in pain and worry, and I lost my drive for my duty. I was making petty calculations of how much I’d expended, how much I’d suffered, debating with God, blaming Him for not protecting my son. The situation I faced, as well as God’s words of revelation showed me that my perspective on pursuit in my faith was wrong. I wasn’t giving things up for my faith to pursue the truth and rid myself of my corrupt disposition, rather, it was in exchange for God’s grace and blessings. I was conducting transactions with God, using Him and cheating Him. My faith was just my single-minded pursuit of God protecting my family and keeping us safe and sound, free from illness and disaster. How was I any different from those religious people who seek bread to satisfy hunger? I saw how vile my perspective on pursuit was. At this realization I felt so indebted to God, and I came before Him in prayer, ready to put my son’s health in His hands, and to submit to His arrangements.

After a period of treatment my son’s condition started to improve, and his state of mind was getting better and better as well. He was eating normally and could do some light activities. I was overjoyed, especially when I saw him singing and dancing with his son, microphone in hand, looking perfectly healthy. I felt like there was greater hope for him, and even thought, “From a human perspective, his illness was a death sentence and he was only supposed to have had six months to live. But it had already

been longer than that and he's recovered so well. It's God's grace and protection. If things continue this way, he should make a full recovery." But things didn't turn out like I'd thought. He suddenly became unable to keep any food down, his abdomen started to swell up more and more by the day, and sitting down was hard for him. He got a checkup and even though the tumor hadn't reappeared, the cirrhosis was getting worse and he was getting liver ascites. I felt like death was closing in on him, bit by bit, and I fell into despair again. I thought, "My son's condition was clearly improving, why is it getting worse again? He is such a good son and gets along great with everyone. Friends, relatives, and neighbors all have great things to say about him. Though he isn't too supportive of my faith, he doesn't stand in my way either. Why would he get a life-threatening illness? My whole time as a believer I've been sharing the gospel, active to do anything that comes up in the church. Regardless of the Communist Party's oppression and arrests, and regardless of the opposition and obstruction I face from my relatives, I never pull back. I keep doing my duty. I've given up so much, so why am I facing this? Is this what I've gotten in return for all my years of sacrifice?" Though I didn't say this, I was overcome with this feeling that God was being unrighteous. I was pessimistic, depressed, and in a haze all the time. I felt devoid of hope. I was suffering terribly and crying all the time.

In my pain, I prayed to God, and sought His will in His words. There was this one passage I read: **"Righteousness is by no means fairness or reasonableness; it is not egalitarianism, or a matter of allocating to you what you deserve in accordance with how much work you have completed, or paying you for whatever work you have done, or giving you your due according to what effort you expend. This is not righteousness, it is merely being fair and reasonable. Very few people**

are capable of knowing God's righteous disposition. Suppose God had eliminated Job after Job bore witness for Him: Would this be righteous? In fact, it would be. Why is this called righteousness? How do people view righteousness? If something is in line with people's notions, it is then very easy for them to say that God is righteous; however, if they do not see that thing as being in line with their notions—if it is something that they are incapable of comprehending—then it would be difficult for them to say that God is righteous. If God had destroyed Job back then, people would not have said He was righteous. Actually, though, whether people have been corrupted or not, and whether they have been profoundly corrupted or not, does God have to justify Himself when He destroys them? Should He have to explain to people upon what basis it is that He does so? Must God tell people the rules He has ordained? There is no need. In God's eyes, someone who is corrupt, and who is liable to oppose God, is without any worth; however God handles them will be appropriate, and all are the arrangements of God. ... God's essence is righteousness. Though it is not easy to comprehend what He does, all that He does is righteous; it is simply that people do not understand. When God gave Peter to Satan, how did Peter respond? 'Mankind is unable to fathom what You do, but all of what You do contains Your good will; there is righteousness in all of it. How can I not utter praise for Your wisdom and deeds?' You should now see that the reason God does not destroy Satan in the time of His salvation of man is that humans may see clearly how Satan has corrupted them and the extent to which it has corrupted them, and how God purifies and saves them. Ultimately, when people have understood the truth and clearly seen Satan's odious countenance, and beheld the monstrous sin of Satan's corruption of them, God will destroy Satan,

showing them His righteousness. The timing when God destroys Satan is filled with God's disposition and wisdom. Everything that God does is righteous. Though humans may not be able to perceive God's righteousness, they should not make judgments at will. If something He does appears to humans as unreasonable, or if they have any notions about it, and that leads them to say that He is not righteous, then they are being most unreasonable. You see that Peter found some things to be incomprehensible, but he was sure that God's wisdom was present and that His good will was in those things. Humans cannot fathom everything; there are so many things that they cannot grasp. Thus, to know God's disposition is not an easy thing" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words showed me that His righteousness isn't like I'd thought—perfectly fair and egalitarian, and it didn't mean you'd get out exactly what you put in. God is the Lord of Creation and His very essence is righteous, so regardless of whether He gives or takes away, whether we receive grace, or we suffer through trials, it all contains His wisdom. It's all a revelation of His righteous disposition. Job followed God's way, fearing God and shunning evil his whole life. He was a perfect person in God's eyes, but God still tested him. His faith in and fear of God were elevated by trial after trial, and ultimately he was a resounding witness for God and entirely overcame Satan. Then God appeared to him and blessed him so much more. That revealed God's righteous disposition. I also thought of Paul. He suffered a lot and traveled far and wide to spread the Lord's gospel, but he didn't have true submission or fear of God. He just wanted to use his hard work to exchange for God's blessings. After doing quite a bit of work, he said: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: From now on there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:7–8). Paul's suffering and contributions were

full of his ambitions and desires and they were transactional. His disposition didn't change at all and he was on a path against God. Ultimately he was punished by God. We can see from this that God doesn't look at how much people appear to work, but at whether they truly love and submit to Him, and whether their life disposition changes. God is so holy and righteous. I thought I'd be repaid for my contributions, that I'd get back something equal to my contribution. That's a human, transactional perspective that is totally different from God's righteous disposition. Though I'd made some sacrifices and I'd done some good things as a believer, my perspective on pursuit in faith was wrong, and I didn't have true submission to God. I still blamed and resisted God when my son became ill. My life disposition hadn't changed, and I was still someone who resisted God and belonged to Satan. I didn't deserve God's blessings at all. I didn't understand God's righteous disposition, and thought that since I'd made some sacrifices in my duty, God should protect and watch over my son. Wasn't I making demands of God based on a human, transactional perspective? I thought of these words of God: **"Everyone has a suitable destination. These destinations are determined according to each individual's essence, and have absolutely nothing to do with other people. A child's wicked behavior cannot be transferred to their parents, nor can a child's righteousness be shared with their parents. A parent's wicked behavior cannot be transferred to their children, nor can a parent's righteousness be shared with their children. Everyone bears their respective sins, and everyone enjoys their respective blessings. No one can be a substitute for another person; this is righteousness"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). I always thought that since I'd sacrificed things in my faith, God should cure my son. Otherwise, I'd see Him as unrighteous. That was

totally absurd of me! No matter how much I'd suffered or how much of a price I'd paid, that was my duty, and what I should do as a created being. It had nothing to do with my son's illness, fate or destination at all. I shouldn't use that as leverage to negotiate, to make deals with God.

One day I read another passage of God's words that helped me understand the essence of my mistaken perspective. Almighty God says: **"No matter how many things happen to them, the type of person who is an antichrist never tries to address them by searching for the truth in God's words, much less tries to see things through God's words—which is wholly because they do not believe that every line of God's words is the truth. No matter how the house of God fellowships the truth, the antichrists remain unreceptive, and in consequence lack the correct mindset no matter what situation they are faced with; in particular, when it comes to how they approach God and the truth, the antichrists stubbornly refuse to put aside their notions. The God they believe in is the God that performs signs and wonders, the supernatural God. Any that can perform signs and wonders—be it Bodhisattva, Buddha, or Mazu—they call God. ... In the minds of antichrists, God should be worshiped while hiding behind an altar, eating the foods that people offer, inhaling the incense that they burn, extending a helping hand when they are in trouble, showing Himself to be omnipotent and providing immediate assistance to them within the bounds of what is comprehensible to them, and satisfying their needs, when people ask for help and are earnest in their entreaties. To the antichrists, only a god such as this is the true God. Everything that God does today, meanwhile, is met with the antichrists' disdain. And why is that? Judging by the nature essence of the antichrists, what they require is not the work of watering, shepherding, and salvation that the Creator**

performs upon the creatures of God, but prosperity and success in all things, to not be punished in this world, and to go to heaven when they die. Their point of view and needs confirm their essence of hostility to the truth” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Fifteen: They Do Not Believe in the Existence of God, and They Deny the Essence of Christ (Part One)). Every word from God really hit the nail on the head. In reflection, I realized I’d always felt like God should reward and bless me for the sacrifices and contributions I had made in my faith, that He should keep my family safe, free from disaster and disease. So when I saw that my son was doing so much better, I felt it was God’s grace, and I was grateful and full of praise for God. But when he got worse again, I wanted God to perform a miracle to cure him. When God didn’t do what I wanted, I went from being all smiles to resentful, mad at God for not taking all my sacrifices and contributions into account to protect and cure my son. I even regretted everything I’d given and sacrificed. My moods all just revolved around whether I was gaining or losing something. In my faith, I hadn’t worshiped and submitted to God as the Lord of Creation, rather as an “idol” to meet my demands and bless me. How was that any different from unbelievers who worship Buddha or Guan Yin? I had not been a true believer! God has incarnated and come to earth twice, enduring incredible humiliation, people’s condemnation, resistance, rebellion, and misunderstanding. It’s all to impart us with His words and truth, to make us live by His words and escape our corrupt dispositions, and to ultimately save us. God has paid such a great price to save mankind. I’d enjoyed so much of God’s grace over my years of faith, gaining the watering and sustenance of so many truths. But I wasn’t genuine toward God at all. That’s so hurtful and disappointing for Him! I started feeling more and more indebted to God, and I knelt before Him, with tears of remorse and guilt pouring down my face. I prayed and repented to God,

saying, “God, I’ve been a believer all these years yet I have not pursued the truth. I haven’t been able to stand witness for You in my son’s illness, and I’ve let You down. God, I want to repent to You, and regardless of whether my son gets better or not, I’m ready to submit to Your rule and arrangements. Please give me faith.” I felt like an enormous weight had been lifted off of me after that prayer and I felt so much lighter.

I read another passage of God’s words that gave me some more understanding of His will. Almighty God says: **“There is no correlation between the duty of man and whether he is blessed or cursed. Duty is what man ought to fulfill; it is his heaven-sent vocation, and should not depend on recompense, conditions, or reasons. Only then is he doing his duty. To be blessed is when someone is made perfect and enjoys God’s blessings after experiencing judgment. To be cursed is when someone’s disposition does not change after they have experienced chastisement and judgment, it is when they do not experience being made perfect but are punished. But regardless of whether they are blessed or cursed, created beings should fulfill their duty, doing what they ought to do, and doing what they are able to do; this is the least that a person, a person who pursues God, should do. You should not do your duty only to be blessed, and you should not refuse to act for fear of being cursed. Let Me tell you this one thing: Man’s performance of his duty is what he ought to do, and if he is incapable of performing his duty, then this is his rebelliousness. It is through the process of doing his duty that man is gradually changed, and it is through this process that he demonstrates his loyalty. As such, the more you are able to do your duty, the more truth you shall receive, and the more real your expression shall become”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). God’s words

showed me that doing our duty has nothing to do with being blessed or cursed. Regardless of whether one obtains blessings or not in their faith, as created beings, duty should be done to repay God's love. That's right and proper. It's like parents raising their children into adulthood—their children should be filial. It shouldn't be about inheriting property, it shouldn't be conditional. That's the minimum someone should do as a person. But I wasn't thinking about how to repay God's love in my duty. Instead, I wanted to use the duty God gave me as leverage to make deals with Him, asking for grace and blessings from God for the little I'd given and sacrificed. Without receiving that, I blamed God. I didn't have any conscience, and I'd really let God down. Especially after my son got sick, I was full of demands, and I was always misunderstanding and blaming God. This thought really made me hate myself. I thought, "Whether my son gets better or not, I'll never blame God again." After that my son's condition got worse and worse. His health was clearly declining by the day. Though it pained me, and I was suffering, I was no longer making demands of God.

One day I read this in God's words: **"God has already fully planned the genesis, advent, lifespan, ending of all the creatures of God, as well as their life's mission and the role they play in all mankind. No one can change these things; this is the authority of the Creator. The advent of every creature, their life's mission, when their lifespan will end—all of these laws have been ordained by God long ago, just as God ordained the orbit of every celestial body; which orbit these celestial bodies follow, for how many years, how they orbit, what laws they follow—this was all ordained by God long ago, unchanged for thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, of years. This is ordained by God, and this is His authority"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). It's true. God is the Lord of Creation, and our lifespan is

determined by Him. How long we live, how much we suffer over the course of our lives, and how much we're blessed are all in God's hands. God won't extend someone's lifespan just because they've done good deeds on this earth, and He won't end their life early because they've done a lot of evil. Whether someone's good or evil, everyone's lifespan is determined by God. No one can change that. God determined a long time ago how long my son's life would be. Anything He does is righteous and I just have to submit to His rule and arrangements. Realizing these things alleviated some of my pain. I knew no matter how my son did, I had to do the duty of a created being and repay God's love.

In March of this year, we said goodbye to my son for good. Thanks to the guidance of God's words, I was able to face his departure correctly and I suffered a lot less. Over these two years, since my son first got sick, though I've suffered quite a bit, through the revelation of this pain and testing I've been able to see my despicable aims, corruption, and impurities in my pursuit of blessings in my faith. I also know more about God's righteous disposition and will no longer make irrational demands of Him. I am now able to submit to His orchestrations and arrangements. This experience has really shown me that no matter what may happen, and no matter whether a thing may be seen by people as bad or good, so long as we pray to God and seek the truth, we may benefit and gain from it.

39. I Am Resolute on This Path

By Han Chen, China

A few years ago, I was arrested by the police for preaching the gospel. The Communist Party sentenced me to three years for “organizing and using a cult organization to undermine the enforcement of the law.” After I got out, I thought I could finally attend gatherings again and resume my duties. I didn’t imagine that the police would keep watching me and limiting my freedom. When my parents took me to the police station for my residential registration, the officer supervising me told me fiercely, “You must report to me if you want to leave the area, and you are forbidden from leaving this city or going abroad for five years. You also cannot practice your faith or attend gatherings. If I find out you’ve been to religious gatherings, I’ll put you right back in prison. And don’t think you’ll be getting out!” Scared I could be arrested again, my parents asked my older sister to keep an eye on me, to make sure I didn’t read God’s words or contact any brothers or sisters. My sister found me a job as a sales clerk, and if I came back home late she would call me and ask, “Where are you? What are you doing?” Once, when I was reading God’s words on my tablet, my sister noticed and pressed me on whether I was reading God’s words, and even tried to snatch the tablet away from me. I quickly blurted out that I was reading a novel, and she left me alone. After that, I had to hide under my blankets to read God’s words only after she was asleep.

One day, my sister found some words of God that I had copied down and questioned me, “You still have faith and attend gatherings, don’t you?” I answered angrily, “Having faith and worshiping God is right and proper. Leave me be!” She then rushed to call our eldest sister, who slapped me in the face as soon as she walked through the door, yelling at me, “How dare

you still believe? Ever since you were put in prison, Mom's been crying her eyes out every single day. She's almost cried herself blind. If you get sent back there, think of what it will do to her! Can't you just give up this God stuff and give her a break for once?" Hearing her say this was almost unbearable, and the tears flowed freely down my face. My mother had been so loving toward me ever since I was a child, and now that I was grown up I was making her worry about me. If I were arrested again, would she be able to manage? I was feeling some weakness, so I quickly prayed to God, asking Him to protect my heart. Later, I saw this in God's words: **"God created this world and brought man, a living being unto which He bestowed life, into it. Next, man came to have parents and kin, and was no longer alone. Ever since man first laid eyes on this material world, he was destined to exist within the ordination of God. The breath of life from God supports each and every living being throughout growth into adulthood"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man's Life). My every breath comes from God. It was God who was watching over and protecting me as I grew up. Anyone who was kind or helpful to me had been arranged by God. The family I was born into and the kind of parents I had were also decided and arranged by God. I should give thanks to God and repay His love, that I was able to grow up without incident, that I was able to live to see today. If I were to deny God or betray Him due to my feelings for my family, it would be unconscionable. My mother was worried for me, and her health was deteriorating. Wasn't all this because of the Communist Party? If they didn't arrest and persecute me, my parents wouldn't have to be afraid. The Communist Party was persecuting me and hurting my loved ones because it wanted me to betray God. I would not allow its schemes to succeed! At this thought, my resolve was restored: No matter how much my family stood in the way, I had to believe in and follow

God! After that, while I worked, I also attended gatherings and shared the gospel.

In February 2017, I was getting ready to go to work one morning when I got a call. A man by the name of Chen, who was section chief from the Political and Legal Affairs Commission, told me: “Come in within the next two days to sign a statement saying that you do not believe in God. All the other local believers who were arrested and released have already signed, you’re the only one left.” Hearing this made me really angry. My faith just entails me attending gatherings and reading God’s words, but they put me in prison for it, tortured me, and forcibly tried to brainwash me. Now that I was out, they were still keeping tabs on me, trying to force me to sign a paper renouncing my faith. They would do whatever it took to make me betray God. They were truly despicable and evil! I could not let Satan’s trickery succeed. But then I thought, “If I tell him I would not sign, would the Political and Legal Affairs Commission send me back to prison? I don’t want to go back to jail and live that inhuman life.” Thinking of this, I said to him: “I’m busy with work over the next two days and I don’t have time. I’ll come in in a few days.” To my surprise, the next morning, Chief Chen sent me a text saying: “Your health insurance card has come through. Come by and get it today.” I thought to myself: “I never applied for a health insurance card. Is this one of Satan’s tricks?” I thought of something God said: **“You must be awake and waiting at all times, and you must pray before Me more. You must recognize the various plots and cunning schemes of Satan, recognize the spirits, know people, and be able to discern all kinds of people, events, and things”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 17). God’s words reminded me that Satan has many tricks. By saying all of the local believers who were arrested and then released had signed except for me, Chief Chen

was trying to trick me into going. Since that trick had failed, he used the health insurance card as bait. He really was crafty. Thinking through all this, I decided not to go in.

Then on the next morning, my father rushed to my work. Looking harried, he told me, “Yesterday, Chief Chen called me into his office first thing in the morning. He told me that the city was doing a special investigation into whether or not you were still practicing your faith. If you sign the paper asserting that you don’t, then you could lead a normal life like everyone else, and nobody will be monitoring or looking for you. But if you don’t sign, you’ll be sent to prison to be reformed. Listen to me—give up your faith and just go and sign your name!” I was indignant and disgusted to hear this. I said to my father, “Dad, you know that believing in God is the right path. So how can I renounce my faith in fear of persecution? Disasters are getting serious now. Almighty God, the Savior, expresses the truth to save people from sin and from disasters. This is our only chance at salvation. By disbelieving, we will surely perish in disaster. The Communist Party rabidly arrests and persecutes believers, forcing them to betray God, so they will end up punished in hell alongside it. Signing my name means betraying God and I will be destroyed in the end! I cannot sign that!” My father, scared and nervous, said to me, “If you don’t sign, the police will put you right back in jail. Do you really want to suffer in there again? Even if you won’t think of yourself, think about your younger sister. The Communist Party targets the entire family of a believer. Look at your older sister. She graduated from a teachers college, but she failed the political screening because of your faith and couldn’t get a job at a key elementary school. Your younger sister is graduating from a teachers college this year and will be looking for a job, and if you don’t sign, she won’t pass her political screening and definitely won’t find a good job.

Aren't you ruining her future? Listen to me, just grit your teeth and sign it. Can't you just believe in secret? Why be so stubborn?" Looking at my father's haggard face, with tears in his eyes, so anxious that there was a crusty film on his mouth, I just felt so terrible and conflicted: "If I sign, I will be betraying God, and I will be branded with the mark of the beast; this is the mark of bringing dishonor to God, and He will not approve of me. But if I don't sign, my sister won't pass her political screening and her future will be impacted. My whole family will hate me for the rest of my life. And what if the police put me back in jail and torture me if I don't sign? What if they beat me to death?" Thinking about all that hurt me like a knife through the chest. I didn't know what choice to make. I said to my father, "Let me think on it." After he left, I prayed to God through my tears: "God, my heart is weak, please give me faith and strength, and guide me to stand firm in my testimony."

After I prayed, I read a passage of God's words: **"When people have yet to be saved, their lives are often disturbed, and even controlled by, Satan. In other words, people who have not been saved are prisoners to Satan, they have no freedom, they have not been relinquished by Satan, they are not qualified or entitled to worship God, and they are closely pursued and viciously attacked by Satan. Such people have no happiness to speak of, they have no right to a normal existence to speak of, and moreover they have no dignity to speak of. Only if you stand up and do battle with Satan, using your faith in God and obedience to, and fear of God as the weapons with which to fight a life-and-death battle with Satan, such that you fully defeat Satan and cause it to turn tail and become cowardly whenever it sees you, so that it completely abandons its attacks and accusations against you—only then will you be saved and become free. If you are determined to fully break with**

Satan, but are not equipped with the weapons that will help you defeat Satan, then you will still be in danger. As time goes on, when you have been so tortured by Satan that there is not an ounce of strength left in you, yet you have still been unable to bear testimony, have still not completely freed yourself of Satan's accusations and attacks against you, then you will have little hope of salvation. In the end, when the conclusion of God's work is proclaimed, you will still be in the grip of Satan, unable to free yourself, and thus you will never have a chance or hope. The implication, then, is that such people will be completely in Satan's captivity" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself II). Thinking on God's words, I realized the Communist Party's persecution and my family's interference were temptations and attacks from Satan. I thought about when Job was tempted by Satan. Everything he owned was stolen from him and he even lost his children. His body was covered in sore boils, his own wife attacked him and told him to abandon God and die, but Job never complained about God or denied Him. Job even praised Him, saying: "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah" (Job 1:21). Job triumphed over Satan's temptations through his faith in and fear of God. Bearing resounding witness for God, he shamed and defeated Satan. After my release from prison, the Communist Party used my family to try to force me to sign a paper renouncing my faith. It was a temptation and attack by Satan. Satan was using my love for my family and concern for my sister's future to get me to betray God. If I defended my family and fleshly interests by betraying God, wouldn't I be in Satan's captivity? I knew I couldn't fall for Satan's tricks, but had to follow Job's example, standing witness for God and humiliating Satan.

I later read another passage of God's words: **"Regardless of how 'powerful' Satan is, regardless of how audacious and ambitious it is, regardless of how great is its ability to inflict damage, regardless of how wide-ranging are the techniques with which it corrupts and lures man, regardless of how clever are the tricks and schemes with which it intimidates man, regardless of how changeable is the form in which it exists, it has never been able to create a single living thing, has never been able to set down laws or rules for the existence of all things, and has never been able to rule and control any object, whether animate or inanimate. Within the cosmos and the firmament, there is not a single person or object that was born from it, or exists because of it; there is not a single person or object that is ruled by it, or controlled by it. On the contrary, it not only has to live under the dominion of God, but, moreover, must obey all of God's orders and commands. Without God's permission, it is difficult for Satan to touch even a drop of water or grain of sand upon the land; without God's permission, Satan is not even free to move the ants about upon the land, let alone mankind, who was created by God. In the eyes of God, Satan is inferior to the lilies on the mountain, to the birds flying in the air, to the fish in the sea, and to the maggots on the earth. Its role among all things is to serve all things, and work for mankind, and serve God's work and His plan of management. Regardless of how malicious its nature, and how evil its essence, the only thing it can do is to dutifully abide by its function: being of service to God, and providing a counterpoint to God. Such is the substance and position of Satan. Its essence is unconnected to life, unconnected to power, unconnected to authority; it is merely a plaything in God's hands, just a machine in service to God!"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique I). Reading this gave me some

insight into God's authority and sovereignty. No matter how savage Satan is, it is just a pawn in God's hands, a tool in service to Him. I thought back to my arrest and torture at the hands of the Communist Party. When my flesh was weak, God's words bolstered my faith and led me through each and every difficulty. After I was released from prison, the Communist Party continued to monitor me, and my family, taken in by their lies, kept watch over me and hindered my faith, too. But through the guidance of God's words, I came to understand some truths, triumphed over temptation after temptation, and my determination to follow God was strengthened. Through all that, I saw that Satan is just a tool for God to perfect His chosen people. There was nothing for me to be afraid of. God rules everything—He is in charge of everyone's destiny. My life and death are in the hands of God. Whether my sister can find a job, what kind of future she will have—these things are all determined by God. The Communist Party can't even control their own fate, so how could they control my life and death, and my sister's future? Even if one day I were to be arrested and tortured by the police again, it would be because God let it happen. I would have to rely on God and stand witness. If I cherished my life, fretted over my family's interests, and signed the paper betraying God, that would be a mark of shame. Even if I lived, I would just be a walking corpse. With that in mind, I steeled myself to resist any temptations and attacks from Satan, and to stand firm in my testimony and humiliate Satan!

That night after I got home, my older sister yelled at me: "The Political and Legal Affairs Commission gave you three days. Tomorrow is the last day. Are you going to sign the paper or not? Mom and Dad are getting old, they worry about you constantly. They barely ate or slept the whole three years when you were in prison. You're out now, but they still live with their hearts in their throats. Are you fine letting them down like this? Do you

even have a conscience? Would it kill you to sign that paper?” I realized that this was Satan attacking me through my family again. I thought of God’s words: **“You must possess My courage within you, and you must have principles when it comes to facing relatives who do not believe. For My sake, however, you also must not yield to any dark forces. Rely on My wisdom to walk the perfect way; do not allow any of Satan’s conspiracies to take hold. Put all your efforts into placing your heart before Me, and I shall comfort you and bring you peace and happiness. Do not strive to be a certain way in front of other people; does making Me satisfied not carry more value and weight? In satisfying Me, will you not be even further filled with eternal and lifelong peace and happiness?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 10). God’s words gave me strength. Faith in God is the right path, and I had to keep my faith in Him and follow Him no matter what. The Communist Party misled and pressured my family into keeping me from my faith. This showed me even more clearly the Communist Party’s demonic essence of hating the truth and being an enemy of God. I despised and rejected it from my heart. Even without any understanding or support from my family, I had to stand witness and humiliate Satan. At this thought, I told my sister: “Mom and Dad not being able to eat or sleep well, and constantly worrying, isn’t this all the Party’s fault? It’s right and proper to believe in God, be a good person, and follow the right path. But the Party not only arrested me, they also left us with no way out. The Party is the culprit!” At that moment, my eldest sister called, demanding an answer: “Are you going to sign tomorrow or not? You only have two choices. Either you sign the paper promising that you don’t believe in God and go on to work, earn money, and live a good life, or you don’t sign and wait to be thrown in prison!” I replied firmly: “Even if I have to go back to jail, I

won't sign that paper!" She angrily hung up on me, and my other sister just ignored me.

Later, I went out of town to perform my duties. Whenever I think back on that whole experience, I feel steadfast in my heart. I feel like it was the best choice I ever made, and I will never regret it.

40. What Comes of Not Striving in My Duty

By Linda, Italy

In 2019, Sister Andrea and I were put in charge of the art design work in the church. When I first started this duty, there were many principles that I didn't grasp, so Andrea patiently fellowshiped with me and took on most of the work herself. Later, I learned she had held this duty for two years, and had some work experience, and in everything from solving problems at gatherings to summing up work, her thinking was more comprehensive than mine. When the brothers and sisters raised questions, she always had good solutions. Compared to her, I felt I was really far behind. I thought, "How much suffering will I have to go through and how much of a price will I have to pay to be like Andrea? Since she has more experience and bears more of the burden, I'll let her do more of the work."

Before the work summaries, Andrea asked me to consider ahead of time how to fellowship to solve problems, and I just thought, "That's a lot of trouble. On top of summarizing existing problems in our duty, I have to find the relevant words of God and principles to fellowship on a solution. Especially in professional issues, I don't have much experience. To provide a solution, I'd have to put in so much effort into finding much information, and seek fellowship on what I don't understand. That would take so much time and effort. Andrea knows this field, so she can do the summaries. I'll leave her to it." I never thought about work summaries again after that. During the summary, when Andrea asked what ideas and thoughts I had, I said, "I'm not familiar with the field, so you'd best do the summaries." Sometimes, when she was planning our direction of study, she'd ask me if I wanted to participate, so as to give my advice and help to avoid potential problems. I thought, "Andrea has always been the one responsible for our

study. To participate, I'd have to think about it, and study things I don't know in great depth. That's too much effort! Forget it, I won't get involved." So, I rejected Andrea.

Later, we were learning a new drawing technique. Over the course of learning this we kept running up against difficulties and problems, but Andrea discussed and solved them with us. Since I didn't know the technique well, I was still confused after hearing things explained twice, and I thought, "Learning new skills in this field is so tiring. I don't think I'll get involved this time. At any rate, we've got Andrea, she can help us learn." Later, when I was studying, I didn't listen carefully. Sometimes I didn't say a word during the whole time; at other times, I went to work on other things. When Andrea asked my ideas and thoughts, I always carelessly answered that I had none. Gradually, I bore less and less of a burden in my duty and I stopped noticing problems in following up work. During that period, my heart felt empty every day, and I became more and more negative. I felt my caliber was low, and that I was not up to the duty.

One day, after discussing work with me, Andrea said, "You've had this duty for a while now, yet you still keep saying you lack experience or don't understand. You just don't want to bear a burden or make an effort. The reason why I have some good ideas is that I often pray, rely on God, and seek principles to understand things. Especially when it comes to professional matters we don't understand, we must take the initiative to study. Otherwise, how can we perform our duty well?" Then she talked about how she relied on God and sought to find solutions when encountering difficulties. However, at the time I still didn't realize my problem whatsoever. Instead, I felt Andrea didn't understand my difficulties, so I didn't take her suggestions to heart, nor did I go on to reflect on myself.

Before long, Andrea was put in charge of other work. I was really sad when she left, because faced with so much work, my mind was blank. I thought, “I’ve been in charge of this work for over a year now, so how am I still unable to take on this work?” This is when I remembered what Andrea had said to me. Had I really not borne a burden in my duty? I prayed to God to ask for His guidance to reflect and know myself. I read this passage of God’s word: **“Much of the time, you are unable to reply when asked about work issues. Some of you have gotten involved in the work, but you have never asked how the work is going or carefully thought about this. Given your caliber and knowledge, you ought to know something at least, because all of you have taken part in this work. So why do most people say nothing? It is possible that you really don’t know what to say—that you don’t know whether or not things are going well. There are two reasons for this: One is that you are totally indifferent, and have never cared about these things, and have only ever treated them as a task to be completed. The other is that you are irresponsible and are unwilling to care about these things. If you truly cared, and were really engaged, you would have a view and perspective on everything. Having no perspective or view often comes from being indifferent and apathetic, and not taking any responsibility. You are not diligent toward the duty you perform, you do not take any responsibility, you are not willing to pay a price or get involved. You do not take any pains, nor are you willing to expend any greater energy; you merely wish to be an underling, which is no different from how an unbeliever works for their boss. This kind of performance of a duty is disliked by God and it does not please Him. It cannot meet with His approval”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). God’s word precisely revealed my state. When

I partnered and discussed work with Andrea, I never had my own views or ideas. I had always felt it was because I didn't know the field or the work well. Only after reading God's word did I understand that it was due to my carelessness and irresponsibility. Thinking back on my time partnering with Andrea, each time I had a professional problem, I never worried about it. I used my inexperience with the duty and poor understanding of principles as an excuse to shirk the problem and avoid it. When discussing work, I was just a listener. I'd never thought about it carefully. I often said in front of Andrea that I didn't understand, that I wasn't able, and that she had more work experience, but these were really just excuses. My real purpose was to gain her sympathy and understanding, so that she would do more of the work and I could keep enjoying my leisure. I was so cunning and deceitful! I had been put in charge of this duty for over a year, and I had a professional foundation, so if I were responsible and studied diligently, I would have had some of my own views when I discussed work. I may have been able to take up the work when Andrea was transferred. I had done nothing but been irresponsible in my duty, as if I was simply working for a wage, surviving day to day with as little effort or worry as I could get away with. I never thought about how to do things properly, do my best, and fulfill my responsibility. I was simply muddling through my duty, thinking only how to avoid carnal suffering. I didn't consider God's will whatsoever. How could I say I had a place for God in my heart? How could God not detest me for my attitude toward my duty?

After that, I read another passage of God's word: **"The Lord Jesus once said, 'For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has' (Matthew 13:12). What is the meaning of these words? What they mean is that if you don't even carry out or dedicate yourself**

to your own duty or job, God shall take away what was once yours. What does it mean to ‘take away’? How does that make people feel? It could be that you fail to attain that which your caliber and gifts could have allowed you to, and you feel nothing, and are just like an unbeliever. That is what it is to have everything taken away by God. If, in your duty, you are remiss, and do not pay a price, and you are not sincere, God shall take away what was once yours, He shall take back your right to perform your duty, He shall not give you this right. Because God gave you gifts and caliber, but you did not perform your duty properly, expend yourself for God, or pay a price, and you did not put your heart into it, not only will God not bless you, He will also take away what you once had. God bestows gifts on people, giving them special skills as well as intelligence and wisdom. How should people use these things? You must dedicate your special skills, your gifts, your intelligence and wisdom to your duty. You must use your heart and apply everything you know, everything you understand, and everything you can achieve to your duty. By doing so, you will be blessed. What does it mean to be blessed by God? What does this make people feel? That they have been enlightened and guided by God, and that they have a path when they perform their duty. To other people it may seem that your caliber and the things you have learned couldn’t enable you to get things done—but if God works and enlightens you, you will not only be able to understand and do those things, but also to do them well. In the end, you will even wonder to yourself, ‘I didn’t use to be that skilled, but now there are so many more good things inside me—all of them positive. I never studied those things, but now I understand them all of a sudden. How did I suddenly become so smart? How are there so many things that I can do now?’ You will not be able to explain

it. This is the enlightenment and blessing of God; this is how God blesses people. If you do not feel this when performing your duty or doing your job, then you have not been blessed by God” (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). After contemplating God’s word, I understood that God blesses honest people and those who expend themselves sincerely for Him. The more a person is diligent and tries to improve in their duty, the more the Holy Spirit enlightens them, and the more effective they are in their duty. Conversely, if you perform your duty with deception, aren’t diligent, and don’t pay a price, you’ll never make progress or receive any benefit from your duty, and you may even lose what you could have achieved. At this moment, I recalled the experience Andrea told me about. The truth was that there had been a lot of work she had not understood at first, but she often brought her difficulties to God, praying, seeking, and contemplating them deeply, and also fellowshiping and summarizing them with others, and, unconsciously, she was enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and was always able to come up with new ideas. She made more and more progress and became more and more effective in her duty. However, I tried to maintain the status quo, didn’t seek progress, tried to enjoy leisure, and never wanted to suffer or pay a price. As a result, I never even reached my potential. Just as God’s words say: **“Whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has”** (Matthew 13:12). God detested my slipshod and irresponsible attitude toward my duty. I realized that if I didn’t repent, I’d certainly be spurned by God, and ultimately, I’d lose my chance to do a duty altogether. Thinking of this, I felt afraid, so I immediately prayed to God to repent and seek His guidance in finding a path of practice.

Later, I read God’s word: **“How should you understand duties? As something that the Creator—God—gives someone to do; this is how**

people's duties come about. The commission that God gives you is your duty, and it is perfectly natural and justified that you perform your duty as God demands. If it is clear to you that this duty is God's commission, and that this is God's love and God's blessing coming upon you, then you will be able to accept your duty with a God-loving heart, and you will be able to be mindful of God's will as you perform your duty, and you will be able to overcome all difficulties to satisfy God. Those who truly expend themselves for God could never refuse God's commission; they could never refuse any duty. No matter what duty God entrusts you with, regardless of what difficulties it entails, you should not refuse it, but accept it. This is the path of practice, which is to practice the truth and give all your devotion in all things, in order to satisfy God. What is the focus here? It is on the words 'in all things.' 'All things' does not necessarily mean things that you like or are good at, much less things with which you are familiar. Sometimes they will be things you are not good at, things you need to learn, things which are difficult, or things where you must suffer. However, regardless of what thing it is, as long as God has entrusted you with it, you must accept it from Him, and having accepted it, you must perform the duty well, giving it all your devotion and satisfying God's will. **This is the path of practice**" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). After pondering these words of God, I was deeply inspired. A duty is a commission from God, and regardless of whether or not we are skilled at it, or whether it is simple or complex, it has come from God, so we have to be responsible, and we have to be as loyal as we can. Only once we do our best and fulfill our responsibility can we receive God's guidance. I thought of all the times I swore before God that I'd loyally perform my duties to repay His love. Now that the duty was a little complicated and challenging,

and I had to suffer and pay a price, I just muddled through and tried to avoid it. When I realized this, I felt I owed God and was unworthy to enjoy His love. I couldn't go on like that. I had to practice according to God's word, treat my duties sincerely, and fulfill my responsibilities fully to avoid having regrets in the future.

So after this, I took the initiative and started to look into and become familiar with the work that was once unfamiliar to me, and when I encountered complicated problems I no longer tried to avoid them. Instead, I took the initiative to discuss and solve them with my brothers and sisters and asked them to teach me when I didn't understand. Gradually, I began to master the details, and was able to provide appropriate solutions when others encountered difficulties. When I summarized our work, at first I had no ideas and still wanted to avoid it, but I recalled what I'd read in God's word, so I consciously forsook my flesh, thought about the problems that were present in our duty, and worked to seek principles and look up information. After practicing that way for a while, I clearly felt God's guidance. Without even noticing, I started understanding a lot of things I didn't understand or that confused me, and every time we summarized the work, we achieved results. My brothers and sisters practiced what we had summarized, and also made progress.

I thought my attitude toward my duty had changed somewhat, but when I encountered the same situation again, I fell back into my old ways.

In September 2021, due to work needs, I started to partner with Sister Rosie to water newcomers. I thought this duty wouldn't involve technical issues, so it'd be less of a headache, but in reality, once I started doing it, I discovered watering the newcomers well wasn't easy. I not only had to communicate in a foreign language, I also had to fellowship on the truth to

quickly resolve their notions and confusion. I saw that Rosie was very proficient in all aspects of the work. She could quickly find the relevant truth to resolve the newcomers' problems, but I saw that I was really bad at it. I couldn't fellowship on the truth clearly or resolve their problems. To reach Rosie's level, I'd need to study and equip myself over a long time and pay a significant price. I thought, "Forget it, Rosie is my partner now anyway, so I don't need to worry." At this thought, I didn't equip myself with the truths regarding watering so eagerly, and after gatherings, I didn't proactively ask newcomers about their problems and difficulties. One day, I reflected that I'd already been doing this duty for two months, yet I still couldn't water a newcomer alone. I always made the excuse that I didn't understand, but in reality I didn't strive to pay a price. I couldn't help but ask myself, "Why is it that as soon as I encounter a duty I'm not skilled at, I use my 'lack of understanding' and 'inability' as excuses to muddle through the duty, and don't want to pay a price?" I brought my state and my confusion before God and prayed.

One day, during my devotionals, I read God's word: **"When performing a duty, people always pick light work, that will not tire them out, that will not involve braving the elements outdoors. This is called picking easy jobs and shirking hard ones, and it is a manifestation of coveting the comforts of the flesh. What else? (Always complaining when their duty is a little hard, a little tiring, when it involves paying a price.) (Being preoccupied with food and clothing, and the indulgences of the flesh.) These are all manifestations of coveting the comforts of the flesh. When such a person sees that a task is too laborious or risky, they foist it off on someone else; they themselves only do leisurely work, and make excuses for why they cannot do this one, saying that they are of poor caliber and do not have the requisite**

skills, that it is too much for them—when in fact, it is because they covet the comforts of the flesh. ... There's also when people always complain while performing their duty, when they don't want to put any effort in, when, as soon as they have a little downtime, they take a rest, chatter idly, or partake in leisure and entertainment. And when work picks up and it breaks the rhythm and routine of their lives, they are unhappy and dissatisfied with it. They grumble and complain, and they become careless and perfunctory in performing their duty. This is coveting the comforts of the flesh, is it not? ... Are people who covet the comforts of the flesh suitable for performing a duty? Bring up the subject of performing their duty, talk about paying a price and suffering hardship, and they keep shaking their head: They would have too many problems, they are full of complaints, they are negative about everything. Such people are useless, they are not entitled to perform their duty, and should be cast out” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (2)). **“Some false leaders do have a little caliber, but they do not do practical work, and they covet fleshly comforts. People who covet fleshly comforts are not much different from pigs. Pigs spend their days sleeping and eating. They do nothing. However, after a year of hard work keeping them fed, when the whole family eats their meat at year's end, they may be said to have been of service. If a false leader is kept like a pig, eating and drinking for free three times each day, growing fat and strong, but they do not do any practical work and are a wastrel, has keeping them not been futile? Has it been of any use? They are only good as a foil to God's work and should be cast out. Really, it is better to keep a pig than a false leader. False leaders may have the title of 'leader,' they may occupy this position, and eat well three times a day, and enjoy many of**

God's graces, and at the end of year, they have eaten themselves fat—but how has the work gone? Look at all that has been accomplished in your work this year: Have you seen results in some area of work this year? What practical work did you do? God's house does not ask that you do every job perfectly, but you must do the key work well—the work of the gospel, for example, or AV work, the text-based work, and so on. These must all be fruitful. Under normal circumstances, an effect—an outcome—can be seen after three to five months; if there is no outcome after a year, then this is a serious problem. After a year, see what work within your scope of responsibility has been most successful, in which you paid the greatest price and suffered the most. Look at your achievements: In your heart, you should have some idea of whether you have made any valuable achievements from your year of enjoying God's grace. Just what were you doing while you ate the food of God's house and enjoyed God's grace for all this time? Have you achieved anything? If you have achieved nothing, then you are a freeloader, a veritable false leader” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (4)). As I pondered these words of God, I felt like they had pierced my heart. Only then did I understand that I always shrank back from difficulty in my duty and used my “lack of understanding” and “inability” as excuses, because I was too lazy and craved carnal comfort too much. In the past, when I was in charge of a duty with Andrea, I'd always picked easy and simple tasks for myself and given her anything I wasn't skilled in or that required careful thinking. Now, in watering newcomers with Rosie, I still didn't want to worry or pay a price. I reflected on my behavior, and realized the main reason for it was that I was controlled by satanic philosophies. Things like “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” “Seize the day for pleasure, for life is short,”

and “Treat yourself while you’re alive” had taken root deep in my heart. I’d always felt people have to live for themselves, and that when we are not suffering and have carnal comfort, we are living as we should. When I came to the church to fulfill my duty, I still held this view. When there were duties I wasn’t good at, when I encountered difficulties that required me to pay a price, I shrank back like a turtle pulling its head in and put my carnal comfort first. Pigs don’t have any thoughts or do anything. They only know to eat, drink and sleep. I was the same, concerned only with my comfort. I was living such a vulgar life! I thought of how in the past as a supervisor, and now in watering, God had been gracious to me, but I didn’t try to make progress, or consider my responsibilities and duties at all. I was irresponsible with the work of the church and with my brothers’ and sisters’ lives. I didn’t have the slightest conscience! I didn’t want to suffer or pay a price, but I used the excuses of “lacking understanding” or being “unable” for sympathy, and to make others think I could admit my flaws, so they’d see me as reasonable and honest. The truth is that I used these words to cover up my own laziness and irresponsibility. I was so cunning and deceitful, and I cheated all my brothers and sisters! Although I could cheat them for a while, God sees everything, and God is righteous. I was trying to fool and cheat God, so how could God not detest me? This is why I never saw God’s guidance in my duties during that time. My being constantly at a loss and lack of obvious progress were signs of danger!

I read the word of God: **“After accepting what was entrusted to him by God, Noah set about carrying out and accomplishing the construction of the ark spoken of by God as if it was the most important thing in his life, without any thought of delay. Days passed, years went by, day after day, year after year. God never put any pressure on Noah, but throughout all this time, Noah persevered in the**

important task entrusted to him by God. Every word and phrase that God had uttered was inscribed on Noah's heart like words carved upon a stone tablet. Heedless of the changes in the outside world, of the ridicule of those around him, of the hardship involved, or of the difficulties he encountered, he persevered, throughout, in what had been entrusted to him by God, never despairing or thinking of giving up. God's words were inscribed upon Noah's heart, and they had become his everyday reality. Noah prepared each of the materials needed for building the ark, and the form and specifications for the ark commanded by God gradually took shape with each careful strike of Noah's hammer and chisel. Throughout wind and rain, and regardless of how people mocked or slandered him, Noah's life proceeded in this manner, year after year. God secretly watched Noah's every action, without ever uttering another word to him, and His heart was touched by Noah. Noah, however, neither knew nor felt this; from start to finish, he simply built the ark, and assembled every kind of living creature, in unwavering fealty to God's words. In Noah's heart, there was no higher instruction that he ought to follow and carry out: God's words were his lifelong direction and goal. So, no matter what God said to him, no matter what God asked him to do, commanded him to do, Noah completely accepted it, and committed it to memory, and took it as his life's endeavor. He not only did not forget, he not only fixed it in his mind, but also made it the reality of his own life, using his life to accept, and carry out, God's commission. And in this way, plank by plank, the ark was built. Noah's every move, his every day, were dedicated to the words and commandments of God. It might not have seemed that Noah was performing a momentous undertaking, but in the eyes of God, everything Noah did, even his every step he took to

achieve something, every labor performed by his hand—they were all precious, and deserving of commemoration, and worthy of emulation by this mankind. Noah adhered to what had been entrusted to him by God. He was unwavering in his belief that every word uttered by God was true; of this, he had no doubt. And as a result, the ark came to completion, and every manner of living creature was able to live upon it” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Two: How Noah and Abraham Listened to God’s Words and Submitted to Him (Part One)). As I pondered God’s words, I was very moved. Noah was obedient and considerate of God. When God told Noah to build the ark, Noah cherished His commission and obeyed His requirements. At first, he didn’t know how to build the ark, and the difficulty of building it was truly too great. At every stage, he had to suffer and pay a price, but Noah was faithful to God’s commission. To complete God’s commission, he willingly suffered, paid the price, and built the ark nail by nail. Noah persisted for 120 years and finally completed God’s commission. Although Noah suffered much to build the ark and didn’t enjoy carnal comfort, he had carried out God’s commission, satisfied Him, and earned His approval. Compared with Noah’s attitude toward God’s commission, I saw that I had no humanity at all. When performing my duty, I was not loyal, I was lazy and cunning, I only craved carnal comfort, and wasn’t willing to suffer at all. I truly was living a despicable life! If I continued like this and didn’t change, in the end I’d lose my duty, which I’d regret for the rest of my life.

In the days that followed, I properly arranged my time, and persisted in equipping myself each day with required truths regarding the watering of newcomers. At a gathering one day, the brothers and sisters raised a problem in the watering work, and when I heard something I didn’t understand, I wanted to avoid it. I thought of letting them talk it out among

themselves. But this time, I was suddenly aware of my wanting to muddle through and not take responsibility. I thought of Noah's serious and responsible attitude toward his commission, and then I rapidly corrected my incorrect state. I listened intently to how they fellowshiped on the truth to solve the problem. In the final summary, I put forward my advice. I was surprised when they said my advice was good. When I watered newcomers with Rosie, I took the initiative to practice resolving the practical difficulties of newcomers, and if there were problems I couldn't solve, I'd ask her for help right away. After a while, I could water the newcomers independently, too. While I still have many shortcomings and flaws, I can feel myself growing and making gains, and I feel more at ease. The understanding and benefits I've been able to receive are entirely the effect of God's work. Thank God!

41. Does Salvation Require Status?

By Yixun, China

For years, I was performing my duty away from home, and I was responsible for the church's work. Though I had a congenital heart disease, I never had any major health issues. But with age over these past couple of years, mentally and physically I'm just not the same as I used to be. Staying up a little later at night leaves me exhausted the next day, feeling weak all over, and my heart doesn't feel right. In August of 2021, the leader considered my condition and was afraid my body couldn't continue to take a high-stress role as a leader anymore, so she had me come back home to take care of my health and do whatever duty I could. This was really upsetting for me to hear. I thought, "It's a crucial time for building up good deeds in a duty. Being transferred, just being an average believer instead of a leader, I'll have fewer chances to practice, I'll learn the truth and enter into reality more slowly, so my probability of being saved will shrink. It won't be like being a leader, always resolving brothers' and sisters' various issues and difficulties, learning and entering truths quickly, with a better probability of salvation. Is God using this situation to expose and cast me out?" I got more upset the more I thought about it, and I couldn't hold back my tears. Later, a sister fellowshipped with me after she found out about my state. She told me, "God's benevolent will is within this, and when we don't understand God's will, first we have to submit, pray and seek more, but we can never misunderstand or complain." Her fellowship reminded me that this situation wasn't random, but that there had to be truth I should seek and enter into, and that I should submit. But I was still really upset. When I woke up at night and that came to mind, I'd just toss and turn, sleepless, thinking over and over, "I've believed all these years, and just when God's

work is finally at its crucial moment, I've lost my chance to serve as a leader. I'm just a regular believer. Do I still have hope to be saved and perfected?" I still wanted to continue serving as a leader, but I feared that my illness might flare up and affect the work of the church. I couldn't just think of myself and endanger the work of the church. The more I thought about it, the more troubled I became. I didn't know how I was supposed to get through this.

In my devotionals, I read some of God's words that revealed how antichrists handle changes in their duty, and I understood a little about myself. God says: **"When adjustments are made to their duties, at the very least, people should submit, benefit from reflecting on themselves, as well as gain an accurate assessment of whether their performance of their duties is qualified. But this is not so for antichrists. They are different from normal people, no matter what happens to them. Where does this difference lie? They do not obey, they do not proactively cooperate, nor do they search for truth in the slightest. Instead, they feel revulsion toward it, and they resist it, analyze it, contemplate it, and rack their brains in speculation: 'Why am I not allowed to do this duty? Why am I transferred to an unimportant duty? Is this a means to reveal me and cast me out?' They keep turning over what has happened in their minds, endlessly analyzing it and ruminating over it. When nothing has happened they are perfectly fine, but when something does happen, it begins churning within their hearts as if in stormy waters, and their heads are filled with questions. It may look from the outside like they are better than others at pondering issues, but in fact, antichrists are just eviler than normal people. ... Antichrists never obey the arrangements of God's house, and they always closely link their duty, fame, and status with their hope of**

blessings and their future destination, as if once their reputation and status are lost, they have no hope of obtaining blessings and rewards, and this feels like losing their lives to them. They think, ‘I have to be careful, I mustn’t be careless! God’s house, the brothers and sisters, the leaders and workers, and even God can’t be relied upon. I can’t trust any of them. The person you can rely on most and who is most worthy of trust is yourself. If you’re not making plans for yourself, then who is going to care about you? Who is going to consider your future? Who is going to consider whether or not you’re going to receive blessings? Therefore, I have to make careful plans and calculations for my own sake. I can’t make mistakes or be even slightly careless, otherwise, what will I do if somebody tries to take advantage of me?’ Therefore, they guard themselves against the leaders and workers of God’s house, fearing that somebody will discern or see through them, and that they’ll then be dismissed and their dream of blessings will be spoiled. They think they must maintain their reputation and status, because they think this is their only hope of gaining blessings. An antichrist sees being blessed as greater than the heavens themselves, greater than life, more important than pursuing the truth, dispositional change, or personal salvation, and more important than doing their duty well, and being a created being that is up to standard. They think that being a created being that is up to standard, doing their duty well and being saved are all paltry things that are hardly worth mentioning, while gaining blessings is the only thing in their entire life that can never be forgotten. In whatever they encounter, no matter how great or small, they relate it to being blessed by God, and are incredibly cautious and attentive, and they always leave a way out for themselves. So when their duty is adjusted, if it is a promotion, an antichrist will think they

have hope of being blessed. If it is a demotion, from team leader to assistant team leader, or from assistant team leader to a regular group member, they predict this to be a major problem and they think their hope of gaining blessing is slim. What sort of outlook is it? Is it a proper outlook? Absolutely not. This view is absurd!” (The Word, Vol. 4.

Exposing Antichrists. Item Twelve: They Want to Retreat When There Is No Status and No Hope of

Gaining Blessings). **“In their hearts, antichrists always equate how high or low their status is with how great or small their blessings are. Whether it is among the family of God or any other group, to them, people’s status and class are strictly delineated, as are their final outcomes; how high someone’s position is and how much power they wield in the house of God in this life is equivalent to the magnitude of the blessings, rewards and the crown they receive in the next world—they are directly tied. Does such a view hold water? God never said this, nor has He ever promised anything like that, but this is the sort of thinking that will arise within an antichrist. ... Wouldn’t you say that people like antichrists have a bit of a mental health issue? Are they evil to the extreme? No matter what God says, they pay no heed, nor do they accept it. They figure that whatever they think and believe is right, and in this, they take pleasure, enjoying and admiring themselves. They do not seek the truth or investigate if that is what is said in God’s words, or if that is what God promised”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Twelve:

They Want to Retreat When There Is No Status and No Hope of Gaining Blessings). God’s words show that antichrists only have faith for blessings and rewards. They rank the various duties, closely linking high or low status with more or fewer blessings that may be received. They think that without status, they have hardly any chance at salvation, so they blame, misunderstand, and even fight against God. They just care about their own interests and whether

or not they can obtain blessings, but they never seek the truth or learn lessons. Moreover, they really don't have any fear of or submission for God in their hearts, but are evil and devious by nature. Based on my behavior, I was just like an antichrist. I was linking my status with the size of my blessings, and I always thought that not being a leader meant that I would be without status and that I would have no hope of being saved or receiving blessings. Because of this, I couldn't handle even a normal change in duty properly and I had a lot on my mind. But in fact, the church arranges each person's duty according to the principles and their actual situation. I had health problems. Leaders have a lot to handle, there's a lot of stress, and my body couldn't take it. My duty would suffer. The church arranging for me to take on what I could was good for both me and the work of the church. But I was suspicious and dubious. My first thought of not being a leader was that I'd have little hope of being saved. The thought of not being blessed and being left without a good destination felt like my only hope in faith had been taken away. I suddenly lost all my drive and became quite negative. I saw I didn't look at things based on truth principles, but based on whether I could benefit from them. When my own ambitions and desires weren't met, I thought God was using that situation to cast me out. I saw I was really devious. I was imagining God to be just like corrupt humanity, without fairness or justice. I thought He measured us and determined our outcomes based on the greatness of our status or duty. I thought if people had status, God would favor and save them, but otherwise He wouldn't save them. Wasn't that denying God's righteousness and blaspheming against Him? After all those years of faith, I saw I didn't understand or obey God at all. Without being exposed by the facts, I wouldn't have realized how wrong my perspective on pursuit was.

I read a couple of passages of God's words later that helped me see my wrong perspective. God's words say: **"Many people don't know clearly what it means to be saved. Some people believe that if they have believed in God for a long time, then they are likely to be saved. Some people think that if they understand a lot of spiritual doctrines, then they are likely to be saved, or some think that leaders and workers will certainly be saved. These are all human notions and imaginings. The key thing is that people must understand what salvation means. To be saved primarily means to be freed from sin, freed from Satan's influence, and genuinely turn to God and obey God. What must you possess to be free from sin and from Satan's influence? The truth. If people hope to obtain the truth, they must be equipped with many of God's words, they must be able to experience and practice them, so that they may understand the truth and enter into reality. Only then can they be saved. Whether or not one can be saved has nothing to do with how long they have believed in God, how much knowledge they have, whether they possess gifts or strengths, or how much they suffer. The only thing that has a direct relationship to salvation is whether or not a person can obtain the truth. So today, how many truths have you genuinely understood? And how many of God's words have become your life? Of all of God's requirements, into which have you achieved entry? During your years of belief in God, how much have you entered into the reality of God's word? If you don't know, or if you have not achieved entry into the reality of any of God's words, then frankly, you have no hope of salvation. You cannot possibly be saved"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Treasuring God's Words Is the Foundation of Belief in God). **"I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they**

invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact. Therefore, all those who are punished are so punished for the righteousness of God and as retribution for their numerous evil acts”

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). I was really touched by these passages. I saw being saved has nothing to do with being a leader or having status. Salvation is about casting off Satan’s dispositions and coming to submit to God. Only those who practice the truth, have their corrupt dispositions changed, submit to God and live by His words can truly be saved. Whatever duty we do, as long as we can accept the truth, focus on self-reflection when we’re pruned and dealt with, know our corruption and faults through God’s words, repent and change, then through that pursuit we can gain the truth and be saved. No matter how high someone’s status or how much they suffer, if they don’t pursue truth, they’ll be cast out. Just like Paul. Though he had great status and prestige, and accomplished a lot, the effort he expended for the work he did was all to obtain blessings and rewards. He never pursued the truth or dispositional change. He didn’t have any understanding of himself or God in the end. He was always bearing witness to himself, and how much he’d suffered for the Lord. He bragged “I was not a whit behind the very most chief apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:5), and even shamelessly boasted “There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:8). To be capable of uttering such heresy that he was a living Christ, offended God’s disposition and he was punished by God. But Peter didn’t care about pursuing status in his faith. He just sought to know and submit to God. He sought to practice and experience God’s words, know his corrupt disposition, and ultimately he was crucified upside down for God. He submitted till death, and loved God

to the maximum. This shows us that having high status and doing a great duty isn't a condition or standard for salvation. Someone with status who doesn't pursue the truth but often resists God, who doesn't have any real testimony of living out God's words, is bound to be cast out. Even if someone doesn't have high status, but they're on the right path and pursue the truth, they can still gain the truth and be saved by God. I felt a lot better when I realized that. I was ready to submit to God's arrangements, and to calmly accept the change in duty.

I read another passage of God's words later that helped me understand God's will better. God's words say: **"Everyone is equal before the truth. Those who are promoted and cultivated are not very much better than others. Everyone has experienced God's work for around the same time. Those who have not been promoted or cultivated should also pursue the truth while performing their duties. No one may deprive others of the right to pursue the truth. Some people are more eager in their pursuit of the truth and have some caliber, so they are promoted and cultivated. This is due to the requirements of the work of God's house. So why does God's house have such principles for promoting and using people? Because there are differences in people's caliber and personality, and each person chooses a different path, this leads to different outcomes in people's faith in God. Those who pursue the truth are saved and become people of the kingdom, while those who do not accept the truth at all, who are not devoted to their duty, are cast out. God's house cultivates and uses people based on whether they pursue the truth, and on whether they are devoted to their duty. Is there a distinction in the hierarchy of various people in God's house? For the time being, there is no hierarchy in various people's status, position, worth, or title. At least during the period when God works to save and**

guide people, there is no difference between various people's rank, position, worth, or status. The only things that are different are in the division of work and in the duty roles performed. Of course, during this period, some people, on exception, are promoted and nurtured, and perform some special jobs, while some people do not receive such opportunities due to various reasons such as problems with their caliber or family environment. But does God not save those who have not received such opportunities? This is not the case. Is their worth and position lower than others'? No. Everyone is equal before the truth, everyone has the opportunity to pursue and gain the truth, and God treats everyone fairly and reasonably'' (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (5)). God's words showed me that in His house, there's no distinction of high or low status for the duties here. Everyone takes on a different duty according to the need of the work, but in reality everyone is equal before the truth. Wherever we're doing a duty, whether we have status or not, God's words sustain every single one of us. He has no bias toward anyone because of their status. God arranges all sorts of situations and events for everyone based on their needs, so that they can experience His work and enter the truth reality. He doesn't strip any one of us of our chance to practice and enter into the truth. God is fair to everyone. Gaining the truth or being saved by God isn't determined by our duty, but entirely by our own pursuit. It is not to say that if we serve as a leader, God will particularly grace and enlighten us, and that if we are common believers, He will ignore us. God enlightens and sustains people based on their pursuit and attitude toward the truth. We can see His righteousness in this. Though people have different duties and encounter different things, the arrogant and devious corrupt dispositions they reveal are all the same. As long as they're willing to pursue and practice the truth,

and cast off corrupt disposition, they can be saved by God. On the other hand, if someone doesn't pursue truth, doesn't seek or practice the truth in the face of problems, then no matter what duty they do or how many chances they get to train, they'll never gain the truth in the end and can't be saved by God. Just like me, after those years of leadership position, with all my status and opportunities to train, how much truth had I really gained? I thought of how the change to my duty had left me negative, misunderstanding, and complaining. I wasn't remotely obedient to God and didn't have any truth reality whatsoever. I was a perfect example. Even so, I kept foolishly thinking that I could gain salvation through status. Status had totally gone to my head. Though some brothers and sisters are never leaders, they keep on pursuing the truth, have a burden in their duty, focus on seeking the truth when things crop up, and carry out the truths they know. The corruption they show gradually diminishes and they submit more and more to God. They have real testimony of living out God's words. This gains God's approval and acceptance. That reminded me of something God says: **"If you pursue genuinely, then I am willing to give you the way of life in its entirety, to have you be like a fish back in water. If you do not pursue genuinely, I will take it all back. I am not willing to give the words from My mouth to those who are greedy for comfort, who are just like pigs and dogs!"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). The Lord Jesus also once said: **"For to every one that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that has not shall be taken away even that which he has"** (Matthew 25:29). God is fair and righteous with humanity and has no bias toward any one person. Regardless of whether one is an average believer or a leader, so long as they pursue the truth, God will provide enlightenment and leadership. What's key is whether someone has the resolve to pursue and practice the truth.

Understanding this was really enlightening for me. Before, I was always worried I wouldn't get as many chances to practice if I wasn't a leader, and then I'd have less hope for salvation. I even thought God wanted to cast me out, that He wouldn't save me anymore. Those were my misunderstandings of God, and it was blasphemy. I had no understanding of God's earnest intentions. Really thinking about it, all those years of faith I was controlled by my mistaken views, just doing my duty to be blessed, thinking I had great pursuit. I was taken in by my own false image, and didn't self-reflect or know myself at all. This shift in my duty revealed my mistaken perspective in pursuit, and I was finally able to come before God to reflect and know myself. I gained some understanding of my corrupt disposition and the problems in my perspective, and I saw God's righteous disposition. I also learned about who God saves and who God casts out, and gained some submission for God. This situation was truly God's protection and salvation for me.

I read another passage of God's words later that helped me clearly see the path of entry I should take. God's words say: **"As a creature of God, man should seek to perform the duty of a creature of God, and seek to love God without making other choices, for God is worthy of man's love. Those who seek to love God should not seek any personal benefits or seek that which they personally long for; this is the most correct means of pursuit. If what you seek is the truth, if what you put into practice is the truth, and if what you attain is a change in your disposition, then the path that you tread is the right one. ... Whether you will be made perfect or cast out depends on your own pursuit, which is also to say that success or failure depends on the path that man walks"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). I found a path of practice in God's words. I'm a

created being, so no matter what God arranges, I have to submit to His rule and arrangements. I can't have faith and do duty just for blessings and rewards. Whether I can eventually be saved or not, whether I'm blessed or not, as long as I live, I should pursue the truth and knowledge of God. Even if I am rejected and cast out by God in the end, that will be His righteousness. After understanding God's will, I was no longer so impacted by which duty I performed. I was able to calmly face the adjustment of my duty.

Through what this situation brought to light, I learned some things about my mistaken perspectives in my faith. I also learned that whether someone can be saved doesn't depend on their status or how much work they've done. What's key is whether they've gained the truth and are someone who submits to God, and whether they have change in their life disposition. From then on, I just wanted to keep my feet on the ground and do my duty well to satisfy God.

42. Gains Made Through Adversity

By Robinsón, Venezuela

At the end of 2019, a relative shared the gospel of Almighty God in the last days with me. I saw that the words of Almighty God had authority, and that they were the truth. I felt that this was the voice of God, and so I accepted God's new work gladly. I read God's word every day and didn't want to miss a single gathering. Sometimes, there would be problems with the internet or power supply where I was, and I couldn't attend the online gatherings. I would be very upset, but I'd quickly read the details of the gathering afterward, and then send my understanding of God's word to the group, commune with the brothers and sisters, and do my duty to the best of my ability.

After a while, I was selected as a church leader. At first, I shared the responsibility of the church work with two other leaders, so I didn't find it too difficult or stressful. Before long, I was chosen to oversee the work of several churches. At the beginning, I didn't want to do this duty. It was because I felt that I hadn't practiced as a leader for long, and that I still had many shortcomings and things I didn't understand, so I was very worried that I wouldn't do this duty well. Later, I read the word of God: **“Noah had heard but a few messages, and at that time God had not expressed many words, and so there is no question that Noah did not understand many truths. He did not comprehend modern science or modern knowledge. He was an exceedingly ordinary man, an unremarkable member of the human race. Yet in one respect, he was unlike anyone else: He knew to listen to God's words, he knew how to follow and abide by God's words, he knew what man's station was, and he was able to truly believe and obey God's words—nothing more. These few**

simple tenets were sufficient to allow Noah to accomplish all that God had entrusted to him, and he persevered in this for not just a few months, nor several years, nor several decades, but for over a century. Isn't this number astonishing? Who could have done this but Noah? (No one.) And why not? Some people say it is due to not understanding the truth—but that is not in accordance with fact. How many truths did Noah understand? Why was Noah capable of all this? The believers of today have read many of God's words, they understand some truth—so why is it that they are incapable of this? Others say it is because of people's corrupt dispositions—but did Noah not have a corrupt disposition? Why was Noah able to achieve this, but the people of today are not? (Because the people of today do not believe God's words, they neither treat nor abide by them as the truth.) And why are they unable to treat God's words as the truth? Why are they incapable of abiding by God's words? (They do not have God-fearing hearts.) So when people have no understanding of the truth, and have not heard many truths, how does a God-fearing heart occur in them? (One must have humanity and conscience.) That's right. In people's humanity, two of the most precious things of all must be present: The first is conscience, and the second is a sense of normal humanity. The possession of conscience and sense of normal humanity is the minimum standard for being a person; it is the minimum, most basic standard for measuring a person. But this is absent from the people of today, and so no matter how many truths they hear and understand, they are not able to possess God-fearing hearts. So what is the difference in the essence of people today compared to Noah? (They have no humanity.) And what is the essence of this lack of humanity? (Beasts and demons.) 'Beasts and demons' doesn't sound very nice, but this is in line with the facts; a more polite

way to put it would be that they have no humanity. People without humanity and sense are not people, they are beneath even beasts. That Noah was able to complete God's commission was because when Noah heard God's words, he was able to commit them to memory; for him, God's commission was a lifelong undertaking, his faith was unwavering, his will unaltered for a hundred years. It was because he had a God-fearing heart, he was a real person, and he had the utmost sense that God entrusted the building of the ark to him. People with as much humanity and sense as Noah are very rare, it would be very hard to find another" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Two: How Noah and Abraham Listened to God's Words and Submitted to Him (Part One)). Noah had never heard any profound messages and he didn't understand many truths, but he had a heart that feared and obeyed God. When God told Noah that He was going to wipe out humanity with a flood and that Noah was to build an ark, Noah accepted without hesitation. Noah was aware that the commission God had given him was not an easy one, as building an ark would entail felling trees and making precise measurements, but even though the project was vast and difficult, Noah did not shrink back, as he knew that this was God's commission of him. In pondering God's words, I realized that I didn't have Noah's humanity or sense. When the leader put me in charge of the work of several churches, I didn't have faith in God and only relied on my own abilities. I felt that my work capabilities were limited, that I hadn't practiced for long as a church leader and had many shortcomings. I worried that I'd not do well, so I was unwilling to accept this duty. I didn't have Noah's faith in God, nor did I have a heart that feared and obeyed God, much less the humanity or sense that Noah had possessed. Realizing this, I no longer worried, and I was willing to obey and accept this duty as Noah had accepted his.

However, once I started the work, I encountered a new problem. I found that I had a lot of work to do. For example, I had to get to grips with the states of the brothers and sisters within the church, support those who weren't gathering normally, get to know the duty difficulties people had and fellowship to resolve them, and help people learn how to do their duties, and so on. These were all responsibilities that I had to bear. When faced with these problems, I didn't know where to start, I didn't know how to do this work well, and I felt extremely stressed. These difficulties caused me to become negative, and I just wanted to tell the leader that I felt I wasn't fit for this duty because I had no experience and I was having a lot of difficulties with it. Later, the leader found out about my state and sent me a passage of God's word to help me. I read the word of God: **"Back when God sent Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, what was Moses' reaction to God's having given him such a commission? (He said he was not eloquent, but slow of speech and tongue.) He had that one, slight misgiving, that he was not eloquent, but slow of speech and tongue. But was he resistant to God's commission? How did he treat it? He fell down prostrate. What does it mean to fall down prostrate? It means to submit and accept. He prostrated his whole self before God, heedless of his personal preferences, and did not mention any difficulties he might have had. Whatever God would have him do, he would do it at once. Why was he able to accept God's commission even when he felt there was nothing he could do? Because he had real trust inside him. He had had some experience of God's sovereignty over all things and matters, and in the forty years he experienced in the wilderness, he had come to know that God's sovereignty is almighty. So, he accepted God's commission with alacrity, and set off to do what God had commissioned of him without another word about it. What does it mean that he set**

off? It means that he had real trust in God, true reliance on Him, and true submission to Him. He was not cowardly, and he did not make a choice of his own or try to refuse. Instead, he fully believed, and he set off to act with God's commission upon him, filled with trust. He believed this: 'If God has commissioned this, then it will all be done as God says. God has told me to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, so I will go. Since this is what God has commissioned, He will go to work, and He will give me strength. I need only cooperate.' This is the insight Moses had. ... Circumstances at the time were not favorable for the Israelites or for Moses. Leading the Israelites out of Egypt was, in the human view, simply an impossible task, because Egypt was cut off by the Red Sea, and crossing that would be a great challenge. Could Moses really not have known how difficult it would be to fulfill this commission? In his heart, he knew, yet he said only that he was slow of speech and tongue, that no one would heed his words. He did not, at heart, reject God's commission. When God told Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, he lay prostrate and accepted it. Why did he not mention the difficulties? Was it that, after forty years in the wilderness, he did not know the perils of the world of men, or the state to which things had progressed in Egypt, or the current plight of the Israelites? Could he not see those things clearly? Is that what was happening? Certainly not. Moses was intelligent and wise. He knew all those things, having personally undergone and experienced them in the world of men, and he would never forget them. He knew those things all too well. So, did he know how difficult the commission was that God had given him? (Yes.) If he knew, how was he able to accept that commission? He trusted in God. With his lifetime of experience, he believed in God's omnipotence, so he accepted this commission of God

with a heart full of trust and without the slightest doubt. ... Tell Me, in his forty years in the wilderness, was Moses able to experience that, in God, nothing is difficult and that man is in God's hand? Very much so—that was his truest experience. In his forty years in the wilderness, there were so many things that posed mortal danger to him, and he did not know whether he would survive them. Every day, he would have struggled for his life and prayed to God for protection. That was his only wish. In those forty years, what he experienced most deeply was God's sovereignty and protection. Later, then, when he was accepting God's commission, his first feeling must have been: 'Nothing is difficult in God. If God says it can be done, then it certainly can. Since God has given me such a commission, He will certainly see to it—it is He who will do it, not any man.' Before taking action, people must plan and make preparations in advance. They must handle the preliminaries first. Must God do these things before He acts? He has no need. Every created being, no matter how influential, no matter how capable or powerful, no matter how frenzied, is in God's hand. Moses had trust, knowledge, and experience of this, so there was not a shred of doubt or fear in his heart. As such, his trust in God was particularly genuine and pure. He may be said to have been filled with trust" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only With True Obedience Can One Have Real Trust).

Having read God's word I realized that I was a coward who did not trust in God and that I had no faith in God. God called upon Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt so that they would no longer be enslaved. Moses did not have an army to fight against the Pharaoh, and it was very difficult to complete this commission, but Moses was able to obey the word of God, and he believed that God would personally lead His people out of Egypt. Thinking back on myself again, I saw so much work that I couldn't do, and

so I wanted to cast aside this duty because I felt I was under a lot of pressure, that this duty was a burden on me, and that I couldn't complete it. I did not trust in God, and I had no faith in God. I only believed in my own limited abilities. I thought that my being able to do my work well was related to my caliber and experience. I didn't believe that the work is all done by God and we just play a supporting role. I had been truly arrogant. It was with God's permission that I was able to perform that duty. Everything is governed and arranged by God. I had to have faith to cooperate practically. From now on, I could no longer reject this duty. I believed that as long as I leaned on God and looked to Him, He would guide and help me, allowing me to understand the truth and all sorts of principles of doing duties through all sorts of difficulties, and gradually come to do my duty well. I also learned that having the chance to do this duty was God giving me a chance to practice, and through this strengthening my faith and bolstering my weak points, so that I could shoulder heavier burdens and do my own part, which is God showing me favor.

Since there have been problems with water, electricity, the internet, and the economy in recent years in Venezuela, we have to work harder than usual to support our families. My father and I would go out fishing every morning at 3 a.m., and we wouldn't get back until around three or four in the afternoon. I felt so tired floating out at sea all day, but when I got back home, I didn't want to rest because there were still so many things that I couldn't do in duty, and I needed to spend more time studying, equipping myself, and making up for my shortcomings to be able to perform my duty properly. If I didn't perform my duty well, I would be letting down God. I thought about the saints of the Age of Grace. They followed the Lord Jesus, spread the gospel, did their duties, underwent many difficulties and dangers, and suffered greatly. How could what little I was suffering even compare?

Therefore, the first thing I'd do when I got home each day was to grab my phone and see what work and assignments there were. I'd also be sending messages to brothers and sisters asking them whether they were having any difficulties. If there was anyone who didn't know how to perform their duty, I'd help them and tell them of what I had learned while doing my duty. In the performance of my duty, I began to learn to rely on God, and when my brothers and sisters were going through difficulties, I would pray to God to guide me, and allow me to find the words of God that would help them. After sharing God's words and fellowshiping with them on my experience and understanding, their states would turn around somewhat. In the course of helping the brothers and sisters, my understanding of the truth became even clearer than before. In undergoing this I saw that no matter the difficulty, as long as we wholeheartedly rely on God, He will always guide us. Though the difficulties were growing, I was not as weak as I had been at first. But before long, I ran up against another big problem. Because of the poor internet where I was, I had no way of regularly gathering or communicating with my brothers and sisters, and no way of performing my duty. I knew that this issue was out of my hands, so I prayed to God for a long time, asking Him to guide me through this. After praying, I gradually calmed down. I then read the word of God: **"When you are at your most difficult time, when you are least able to feel God, when you feel most painful and lonely, when you feel as if you are far from God, what is the one thing you should do above all else? Call out to God. Calling out to God gives you strength. Calling out to God lets you feel His existence. Calling out to God lets you feel God's sovereignty. When you call out to God, pray to God, and put your life in God's hands, you will feel that God is by your side and that He has not abandoned you. When you feel that God has not abandoned you, when you truly feel that He is by your**

side, will your trust grow? If you have real trust, will it wear down and fade away with the passage of time? Absolutely not” (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only With True Obedience Can One Have Real Trust).

When you encounter difficulties, call out to God with your heart, and you will have faith and strength. The capabilities of humans are limited. We have no means of seeing things beyond our field of view, so we always fear the difficulties that arise before our eyes. God rules over all things, and so long as we sincerely rely on God, God will guide us and help us perform our duties. The word of God gave me faith and strength. I couldn't fail to do my duty in the face of numerous difficulties. I had to pray and rely on God to get through these difficulties, and work even harder in the performance of my duty. So I started going out in the street looking for a more stable internet connection that would enable me to gather normally. Sometimes when I was hosting a gathering, I would go out on the street at about 8 p.m., and only get back home at around half past ten or eleven when the gathering ended. I was very scared on the way back home because I was living in a dangerous place, and I was scared that somebody would steal my phone, in which case I'd not be able to carry on gathering or performing my duty. I'd often pray to God, asking Him to give me the strength to persist amidst difficulty. Before long, I received a message. One of the brothers had found out about my situation and had taken the initiative to send me a message: "Brother, I know that you're going through a difficult time right now, and that you've been going out onto the streets late at night to do your duty. This is extremely dangerous. I have a bike, and I can lend it to you when you need it. This will make it easier for you to get about." I felt so grateful to God. I'd learned a lot through these difficulties, and I'd also learned to rely on God. I'd come to realize that it is God who is sovereign over all things, and that it is God who arranges environments for everyone.

I had actually seen the actions of God, and my faith in God was stronger now. When others encountered difficulties like those I encountered, I shared the word of God with them, and I fellowshiped some of my own experience to help them and give them faith in God.

After I'd get home from fishing each day, I'd stay home and read God's word, and when it was time for gatherings I'd bike out onto the streets to find a place with good internet. Every time I prayed to God, I prayed for God to guide me in doing my duty better. I was no longer concerned with my difficult situation. I just wanted to do my duty well in keeping with the will and demands of God. Even if I had to face more difficulties, I was willing to obey God's sovereignty and arrangements, to experience the environment that God had arranged for me, and to seek to satisfy God's heart. After a while, the brothers and sisters helped me find a suitable home which had comparatively stable internet. I was so grateful to Almighty God because here, I could do my duty better, and under the guidance of God, I had made great progress with my duty. After that, the leader told me again that I would be responsible for even more work, that my burden would be even greater, that there would be even more work to do, and I would need to look after and help even more brothers and sisters. But I no longer have any worries or complaints. So long as I continue to trust in and rely on God, God will guide me and help me do my duty properly.

Later, I read more of God's words: **"The more mindful you are of God's will, the greater the burden you bear, and the greater the burden you bear, the richer your experience will be. When you are mindful of God's will, God will lay a burden upon you, and then enlighten you about the tasks which He has entrusted to you. When God gives you this burden, you will pay attention to all the related truths while eating**

and drinking of God's words. If you have a burden related to the state of your brothers' and sisters' lives, then this is a burden that has been entrusted to you by God, and you will always carry this burden with you in your daily prayers. What God does has been laden onto you, and you are willing to do that which God wants to do; this is what it means to take on God's burden as your own" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Be Mindful of God's Will in Order to Attain Perfection). **"In many cases, the trials of God are burdens He gives to people. However great the burden bestowed upon you by God, that is the weight of burden you should undertake, for God understands you, and knows you will be able to bear it. The burden given to you by God will not exceed your stature or the limits of your endurance, so there is no question that you will be able to bear it. No matter what manner of burden God gives you, what kind of trial, remember one thing: Whether or not you understand God's will and whether or not you are enlightened and illuminated by the Holy Spirit after you pray, whether or not this trial is God disciplining you or warning you, it does not matter if you do not understand. As long as you do not delay in performing your duty and can faithfully abide by your duty, God will be satisfied, and you will stand firm in your testimony"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only in the Frequent Reading of God's Words and Contemplation of the Truth Is There a Way Ahead). By reading God's word I understand that God will not give us burdens that we cannot shoulder, that God knows our statures and what we can do. The more we are willing to heed God's will and the more of a burden we have in our duties, the richer our experiences are, the deeper our understanding of God will be. Having gone through these difficulties, I now understand that in times of difficulty I can know myself and the actions of God better, and that I can have more faith in God. When I just started doing

this duty, I lacked faith, I didn't know to pray or rely on God, and I didn't seek God's guidance. I was just trying to rely on my own talents to do my duty. After reading God's word and coming to understand His will, I gained faith and worked hard in my duty. I'd often pray and rely on God, and I'd seek and commune with leaders, becoming aware of principles relevant to doing my duty, as well as some paths and courses by which to do church work. Having gone through these things, I am no longer in a negative state, and I no longer feel that I cannot do my duty well. When things befall me each day, I learn to seek the truth, properly carry out my duty with diligence, and when I encounter difficulties, I pray to God, and God guides and helps me to get through all these environments and hardships. I also no longer feel that my troubles or stresses are so great. Had I not gone through these difficulties, I would not have been enlightened by God, I would not have these realizations and gains, much less would I have true experience. In that case, I wouldn't do my duty properly. I now understand God's word saying: **"The more mindful you are of God's will, the greater the burden you bear, and the greater the burden you bear, the richer your experience will be"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Be Mindful of God's Will in Order to Attain Perfection). I long to bear more burdens to repay God's love.

Nowadays, Venezuela has many difficulties with its economy, public services, and internet. Though I sometimes feel stressed, I have learned to rely on and seek God, and to have faith in Him. If I had not undergone these difficulties, I wouldn't understand the importance of doing my duty or how to seek God amidst difficulty. Thank God for allowing me to make these gains and attain this knowledge.

43. After the Death of My Partner

By Zhanqi, China

My wife and I accepted God's work of the last days in the fall of 2007, one after the other. Through reading God's words, I became certain that Almighty God is the true God, who has become flesh to save mankind from the disasters. I thought that having the chance to accept God's salvation in our old age was an incredible blessing, and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that we couldn't miss. We both took on a duty soon after accepting the gospel. I was sharing the gospel and watering newcomers, and my wife was at home hosting. We passed our days happily. Before long, my wife's stomach condition, bronchitis, and a few other ailments had gotten better on their own. God had graced and blessed us. Our faith in God grew, and I had more drive for sharing the gospel. In 2012, I was arrested and taken to the township police station when I was sharing the gospel. After my release, the police would still harass us now and then because of our faith. They also threatened us that if we kept our faith, the future prospects of our children and grandchildren would suffer. Our daughter-in-law believed the CCP's lies about our faith, and kicked both me and my wife out of the house during the Chinese New Year festival. We had nowhere to go, and we felt miserable and weak. We comforted and encouraged each other, saying: "This is a refinement from God, and it's hardship we should bear. We can't become dispirited. We can do without anything at all, but we can't be without God." After that, we stayed in an abandoned house, doing a hosting duty. We stayed there 8 years, and though it was a run-down place, we were never bothered for believing and eating and drinking God's words, so our hearts were free.

In September 2022, the angina my wife had had for years began acting up, and she was having several attacks a day. The pain was getting more and more frequent, too. In gatherings, she couldn't even kneel down for prayer. Sometimes her heart pain would start up while she was washing her face. When it hurt really badly, she had to just stand there, and finish washing her face when the pain faded. Seeing my wife's condition deteriorate by the day was upsetting and concerning for me, but I figured we were believers, so we had God's care and protection. God is almighty, He can bring the dead back to life, and there's nothing He can't do. She'd been riddled with illnesses before, but after gaining faith she'd gotten completely better, so what was this little health problem? I didn't think much of it and I comforted her, saying: "Don't be afraid—we have God. He'll protect us." I noticed later that my wife was in even more pain, and taking more medication didn't help at all. I thought of how God does practical work, and He protects people, but we have to cooperate in practical ways. I then rushed my wife over to the hospital. The tests showed her liver, kidneys, and lungs were all damaged. The doctor sent her right over to the ICU, saying her life was in immediate danger, and that I should sign a notice of critical condition. I was stupefied when I saw that notice of critical condition, and I nearly collapsed. I just couldn't accept that reality. I didn't dare believe it. How could something like that happen? We were believers with God's protection, so that shouldn't happen to us. I implored the doctor, asking him to think of a way to cure my wife's disease, to use any drugs that might work. The doctor said he couldn't make any guarantees. Hearing that from him, I was in even more pain. I thought I couldn't rely on the doctor, so I'd lean on God. When I got back to the ward, I called out to God in prayer: "God! My wife is seriously ill and the doctor doesn't know what to do. I'm handing her over to You. You're the

almighty doctor who can even bring the dead back to life. Nothing is impossible with You. I won't blame You even if she can't be healed." I knew that God isn't performing supernatural work now, but I thought about some brothers' and sisters' experiential testimonies. They started to become seriously ill, then leaned on God, and miraculously got better. I was still hoping for a miracle to happen to my wife, that her condition might improve. But to my surprise, the morning of the third day, she couldn't even talk anymore, and she couldn't open her eyes. I could see that not only had her condition not improved, but it was getting worse and worse. I was absolutely heartbroken, and called out to God in my heart over and over, "Oh God! My wife clearly isn't doing okay. She's a true believer who has followed You over 10 years. She has suffered and been oppressed for her faith, so please show a miracle and make her better. You could cure her, then it would make our evangelism and witness more convincing." But I was shocked when, on the fourth day, her breathing stopped. I was in total despair. There's no way for me to describe the pain I felt; I was in tears, and I couldn't help but start to blame God: "God, no matter what, my wife was a believer. She suffered and toiled to follow You, and she never blamed You no matter how ill she got. Why didn't You protect her? Now that she's gone, I'm left all alone with no one to turn to. How can I keep on living? We all die just the same, whether we're believers or not, right? I'm getting up there in age, too, and my day will come sooner or later. What hope is there as a believer?" After that, I wrote it off as hopeless and didn't even want to read God's words. My prayers were just a few words—I didn't have much to say. Whenever I thought of how we had relied on each other, and those touching scenes of us during hard times, eating and drinking God's words, fellowshiping together and encouraging each other, I just couldn't hold my tears back. It was usually my partner who took care of me, and

now that she was gone, there wasn't anybody to look after me. I was running into all sorts of difficulties, and I felt really alone. With life being so painful, what was the point? I wanted to die and get it over with. My life was full of pain and misery in those days. I was unable to eat or sleep. It felt like a stone was lodged in my heart. My health was declining by the day. My blood pressure went up and my heart rate got really low; I was admitted to the hospital. Only then did I realize going on that way would be really dangerous, so I said a prayer: "Oh God! With my wife gone, I'm struggling and lonely. I don't have the strength to continue on, and I'm hoping for death. I know those sorts of thoughts aren't in line with Your will, but I still can't forsake myself. Please give me faith, so that I can stand firm and not fall down in this trial."

One evening as I was going to sleep, some words of God suddenly popped into my mind: "What is the essence of your love for God? If you love Me, you won't betray Me." I realized this was God's enlightenment and guidance, so I quickly searched through God's words. Almighty God says: **"As I said, those who follow Me are many but those who truly love Me are few. Perhaps some might say, 'Would I have paid such a great price if I did not love You? Would I have followed to this point if I did not love You?' Assuredly, you have many reasons, and your love, assuredly, is very great, but what is the essence of your love for Me? 'Love,' as it is called, refers to an affection that is pure and without blemish, where you use your heart to love, to feel, and to be thoughtful. In love there are no conditions, no barriers, and no distance. In love there is no suspicion, no deceit, and no cunning. In love there is no trade and nothing impure. If you love, then you will not deceive, complain, betray, rebel, exact, or seek to gain something or to gain a certain amount. If you love, then you will gladly dedicate yourself, will**

gladly suffer hardship, you will be compatible with Me, you will forsake all that you have for Me, you will give up your family, your future, your youth, and your marriage. If not, your love would not be love at all, but deceit and betrayal! What kind of love is yours? Is it a true love? Or false? How much have you forsaken? How much have you offered up? How much love have I received from you? Do you know? Your hearts are filled with evil, betrayal, and deceit—and that being so, how much of your love is impure? You think that you have already given up enough for Me; you think that your love for Me is already enough. But then why are your words and actions always rebellious and deceitful? You follow Me, yet you do not acknowledge My word. Is this considered love? You follow Me, yet then cast Me aside. Is this considered love? You follow Me, yet you are mistrustful of Me. Is this considered love? You follow Me, yet you cannot accept My existence. Is this considered love? You follow Me, yet you do not treat Me as befits who I am, and you make things difficult for Me at every turn. Is this considered love? You follow Me, yet you try to fool Me and deceive Me in every matter. Is this considered love? You serve Me, yet you do not dread Me. Is this considered love? You oppose Me in all respects and all things. Is this all considered love? You have dedicated much, it is true, yet you have never practiced what I require of you. Can this be considered love? Careful reckoning shows that there is not the slightest hint of love for Me within you. After so many years of work and all the many words I have supplied, how much have you actually gained? Does this not merit a careful look back? I admonish you: Those I call to Me are not the ones who have never been corrupted; rather, those I choose are the ones who truly love Me. Therefore, you must be vigilant in your words and deeds, and examine

your intentions and thoughts so that they do not cross the line. At the time of the last days, do your utmost to offer up your love before Me, lest My wrath never depart from you!” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Many Are Called, but Few Are Chosen). God was judging my heart with every single question, leaving me ashamed of myself and unable to answer. As I read, I couldn't hold back my tears of regret. God made all those demands of me, but I didn't fulfill a single one. My love for God wasn't true love, but false love, impure and transactional. But I still thought I had love for God. I really didn't have the slightest self-knowledge. Generally, when I encountered hardship or sickness and I got God's care and protection, or when I felt like I had hope of being saved and entering the kingdom, I would give thanks to God, and I had boundless energy. When faith was difficult and painful, like being arrested by the great red dragon, oppressed and rejected by my children, mocked and slandered by relatives and neighbors, I could handle all that hardship. I'd rather flee home and beg for a living and wander the streets than betray God. I thought this meant I had genuine love and genuine submission for God, and in the end I'd be saved by God and remain. But when something real happened and my partner's death hit me where it hurt, leaving me alone, lonely, in pain, and with no one to rely on, also shattering my dream of entering the kingdom with my wife, I was thoroughly exposed. I not only blamed God for not protecting my wife, but also questioned God, and wanted to die to go confront Him. I had no obedience. I had no trace of love for God. God has incarnated twice for mankind's salvation, suffering all kinds of pain, expressing the truth to water and shepherd us for years, paying a great price so that we can understand the truth. No matter how rebellious and resistant I was, God was patient, tolerant, and merciful to me time and time again, giving me the chance to repent. Through danger and difficulty, God

watched over us so many times, keeping us from danger. When I felt weak and negative, God's words supported and sustained me, giving me strength, making my spirit strong. He guided me step by step to the present day. God's love is so very practical, and so very genuine. It has no adulterations and no conditions. But my love for God was so impure and transactional. I was always shouting about how God's words should reign supreme in my heart, but as soon as my wife died, all I could think about was her. My love for my partner surpassed my love for God—He didn't have any place in my heart. I saw that my so-called love was just a catchphrase, a doctrine. I was fooling and deceiving God. It couldn't withstand a test—it was totally fake! Realizing this, I regretted being too rebellious and having no conscience. I came before God to pray and repent. "God! After reading Your words, I feel I owe You. The years I've followed You, You've watered, shepherded, supported, and sustained me, paying such a great price. Your love for me is so genuine, but my love for You is just a slogan, a word. It was all fake; it was deception. I'm not worthy of coming before You. I don't want to hurt You anymore. No matter what difficulties or situations I encounter in the future, no matter how tough things get, I won't blame You anymore. I'm ready to submit to Your orchestrations and arrangements." In the following days, I calmed myself, ate and drank God's words, watched videos, and listened to hymns, and then I wasn't in as much pain as before.

One day, I came across a passage of God's words and only then did I realize that the reason I couldn't let go of my wife's death, and harbored blame and misunderstandings toward God, was because my views toward pursuit was wrong. God's words say: **"What you pursue is to be able to gain peace after believing in God, for your children to be free from illness, for your husband to have a good job, for your son to find a good wife, for your daughter to find a decent husband, for your oxen and**

horses to plow the land well, for a year of good weather for your crops. This is what you seek. Your pursuit is only to live in comfort, for no accidents to befall your family, for the winds to pass you by, for your face to be untouched by grit, for your family's crops to not be flooded, for you to be unaffected by any disaster, to live in God's embrace, to live in a cozy nest. A coward such as you, who always pursues the flesh—do you have a heart, do you have a spirit? Are you not a beast? I give you the true way without asking for anything in return, yet you do not pursue. Are you one of those who believe in God? I bestow real human life upon you, yet you do not pursue. Are you no different from a pig or a dog? Pigs do not pursue the life of man, they do not pursue being cleansed, and they do not understand what life is. Each day, after eating their fill, they simply sleep. I have given you the true way, yet you have not gained it: You are empty-handed. Are you willing to continue in this life, the life of a pig? What is the significance of such people being alive? Your life is contemptible and ignoble, you live amid filth and licentiousness, and you do not pursue any goals; is your life not the most ignoble of all? Do you have the gall to look upon God? If you continue to experience in this way, will you not acquire nothing? The true way has been given to you, but whether or not you can ultimately gain it depends on your own personal pursuit” (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). Reading God's words made me realize my faith wasn't for the pursuit of the truth, but it was to be blessed, to benefit, and to gain peace. I was making a deal with God. Ever since my wife and I first accepted God's new work, I thought that we had faith, followed God, and could suffer and pay a price for Him, so He would certainly ensure our peace and health, and when His work ended, we could enter the kingdom together and enjoy its

blessings. We became active in a duty as soon as we became believers so that we'd gain a good destination. I saw my wife recover out of the blue from quite a few serious health problems. We were blessed and graced by God. I became even more motivated, and even though we suffered the great red dragon's arrest and our family's oppression, and were run out of the house by our kids, we never turned back no matter how hard it was, determined to follow God till the end. I thought this was standing firm in our witness and having devotion for God, and that in the end, we'd be saved and remain. My wife getting ill didn't line up with my notions, and I demanded that God show a miracle and cure my wife. I used my past suffering and oppression as capital to make a deal with God, to present conditions. My wife passing away shattered my dream that we would enter the kingdom and enjoy its blessings together. I did an immediate about-face, demanding to know why God hadn't protected my wife. I even wanted to die to go confront God, questioning His righteousness, and felt like having faith was meaningless. I saw that in my faith, I was just like those in religion, demanding to get their fill. It was all to gain blessings and peace. When I was blessed, I thanked and praised God, and lauded His righteousness. When I wasn't blessed, I blamed God, argued with Him and made a fuss. In my faith, all I wanted was to gain grace and blessings from God, all the while claiming I loved and submitted to God. Wasn't that deceiving Him and toying with Him? My life and everything I had was granted by God. My marriage was also arranged by God. God had given me such great grace and blessings, but I still wasn't satisfied. I totally changed and made complaints when something didn't go my way. Where was my conscience? Was I even human? I was worse than a dog! A dog can watch over its owner's house and be faithful to them, but as a believer and follower of God, I'd accepted so much of God's watering and shepherding,

enjoyed God's abundant grace, yet didn't want to repay God's love, even deceiving God and trying to make deals. I didn't have any humanity at all! I saw that I had faith only to gain blessings, not to gain the truth, pursue change in my life disposition, or live a life of meaning. After all those years of faith, I still didn't possess the slightest truth reality. At every turn, I was reasoning with God and laying out my conditions, full of extravagant desires. Yet, I still expected to enter the kingdom and enjoy its blessings. What wishful thinking! What a delusional dream! If it hadn't been for the exposure of that situation, I still wouldn't know myself, and I wouldn't see how devoid of conscience and reason I was. Before, I always thought that as a believer for years, praying and reading God's words every single day, never retreating in the face of oppression, I was someone of stature, and I was devoted to God, so when the time came I'd certainly be saved and enter the kingdom. But then I learned, if I wanted to achieve salvation, the key was to put the truth into practice and live out the truth reality. If I didn't change my pursuit of gaining blessings, I could believe until the end, but without any dispositional change, I'd be cast out, destroyed by God.

When I saw brothers and sisters later, they shared a couple passages of God's words with me that addressed my state. Almighty God says: **"If one's birth was destined by one's previous life, then one's death marks the end of that destiny. If one's birth is the beginning of one's mission in this life, then one's death marks the end of that mission. Since the Creator has determined a fixed set of circumstances for a person's birth, it goes without saying that He has also arranged a fixed set of circumstances for one's death. In other words, no one is born by chance, no one's death arrives abruptly, and both birth and death are necessarily connected with one's previous and present lives. The circumstances of one's birth and death are both predetermined by the**

Creator; this is a person's destiny, a person's fate. Since there are many explanations for a person's birth, it is also true that a person's death will naturally occur under its own, special set of various circumstances. This is the reason for people's varying lifespans and the different manners and times of their deaths. Some people are strong and healthy, yet die young; others are weak and sickly, yet live to an old age and pass away peacefully. Some perish of unnatural causes, others die naturally. Some end their lives far from home, others shut their eyes for the final time with their loved ones by their side. Some people die in midair, others beneath the earth. Some sink beneath the water, others are lost in disasters. Some die in the morning, others at night. ... Everyone wants an illustrious birth, a brilliant life, and a glorious death, but no one can reach past their own destiny, no one can escape the Creator's sovereignty. This is human fate. Man can make all kinds of plans for his future, but no one can plan the manner and time of their birth and of their departure from the world. Though people do their best to avoid and resist the coming of death, still, unbeknownst to them, death silently draws near. No one knows when they will perish or how, much less where it will happen. Obviously, it is not humanity that holds the power of life and death, not some being in the natural world, but the Creator, whose authority is unique. Mankind's life and death are not the product of some law of the natural world, but a consequence of the sovereignty of the Creator's authority" (The Word, Vol.

2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). "In this life, people have but a limited time to go from understanding things to having this opportunity, possessing this caliber, and satisfying the conditions to engage in dialogue with the Creator, so as to reach true understanding, knowledge, and fear of the Creator, and walk the way of fearing God

and shunning evil. If now you want God to quickly lead you away, you are not being responsible with your own life. To be responsible, you should work harder to equip yourself with the truth, reflect on yourself more when things happen to you, and quickly compensate for your own shortcomings. You should come to practice the truth, to act in accordance with the principles, to enter into the truth reality, to know more of God, to be able to know and understand God's will, and to not live your life in vain. You must come to know where the Creator is, what the Creator's will is, and how the Creator expresses joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness—even if you cannot attain a deeper awareness or complete knowledge, you must at least possess a basic understanding of God, never betray God, be fundamentally compatible with God, show consideration to God, offer basic consolation to God, and do what is proper and basically achievable for a created being. These are no easy things. In the process of fulfilling their duties, people can gradually come to know themselves, and thereby know God. This process is actually an interaction between the Creator and created beings, and it should be a process worth reminiscing on throughout one's life. This process is something people should be able to enjoy, rather than a painful and difficult process. Therefore, people should cherish the days and nights, years and months spent fulfilling their duties. They should cherish this phase of life, and should not regard it as an encumbrance or burden. They should savor and gain experiential knowledge of this stage of their lives. Then, they will attain an understanding of the truth and live out the semblance of a human being, possess a God-fearing heart, and do less and less evil. You understand much of the truth, you do not do things that grieve or irritate God. When you come before God, you feel that God no longer

hates you. How wonderful! Once someone has attained to this, wouldn't they be at peace even if they were to die? So, what's the matter with those people who are begging to die now? They just want to escape and don't want to suffer. They just want a quick end to this life, so they can go and report to God. You want to report to God, but God doesn't want you yet. Why would you report to God before He even calls you? Don't report to Him before your time. This is not a good thing. If you live out a meaningful and valuable life and God gathers you away, that is a wonderful thing!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses

of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). After reading those two passages of God's words, my heart brightened considerably. Before, I thought that since my wife was a believer for years and didn't blame God even at death, God shouldn't have let her die so soon. He should have let her live so we could enter the kingdom together and have a good destination and outcome. This is why I wasn't able to let go of her death and my heart was full of blame and misunderstanding toward God. Reading God's words showed me that having faith doesn't guarantee a person won't die. Birth, old age, illness and death are things that no one can avoid. Whatever age people live to is entirely predetermined by God. My wife's birth and death were impacted by her previous and present lives, and God had arranged all that before she was even born. The time of her birth, her trajectory in life, her life's intended mission, what age she lived to, and when she would die—none of this was random. People often say that our fates are determined by Heaven. This is a heavenly rule, and no one can break it. When my wife's lifespan was up, she went naturally, and no one could have changed that. I used to think that since my wife died, she couldn't be saved anymore. But now I know that whether someone dies has nothing to do with their salvation. The key to

their salvation is whether they pursue the truth, whether they live out the reality of God's words. Those who obey God and who pursue and gain the truth will have their souls saved after death. Take Abraham, Job, and Peter—their bodies all passed away, but their souls were saved after death, and they had a good outcome and destination. Some believers don't have true faith and are just like nonbelievers. Even though they're living now, they can't be saved. My wife believed in God for many years, and I couldn't know if her faith was true or false. No matter how God arranged her outcome, whether He sent her to hell or up to heaven, God was righteous, and He wouldn't do anything wrong. As a created being, I should submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements. I need to have that sort of reason. I lacked clarity before and I wasn't willing to submit to God's rule and arrangements. When my wife died, I wanted to die and get it over with. But now I realized that my wife's death was ordained by God, and He allowed it. Also, wanting to die was defying God, it was not submitting to Him; it was rebelling against Him. My wife's death caused me pain and misery, but God's good will was behind it. For one thing, it exposed my corruption, and could cleanse my internal drive to do deals with God for blessings. It also helped me know God's righteous disposition. That was God's love and salvation. God was allowing me to continue living at this advanced age. I should be treasuring this time and diligently pursuing the truth in the environment God set up, to understand my corruption and God's work, to achieve submission to and worship of God, and to stop rebelling against God and hurting Him. No matter what God did in the future, what environments He arranged, I should listen to Him, live my life properly, spread the gospel and bear witness to God, live to do the duty of a created being, and submit to God's rule and arrangements. I couldn't let His kind intentions down. I had to get rid of my thoughts of ending my life. So, I

earnestly prayed to God, “God! I don’t want grace or blessings. I’m lacking the truth, so I’m not asking for anything else, just the truth. I have a corrupt, satanic disposition and I need Your judgment and chastisement with me to keep me in check and not wanton.” With this understanding, I felt more relaxed throughout my whole body. I could enjoy my food and sleep well again. Because of the adverse circumstances I couldn’t gather with brothers and sisters, but I still did regular devotionals and ate and drank God’s words. His words watered and nurtured me, and I felt calm, at peace, and free. I also gradually recovered my health. Other villagers who saw me said that I looked vigorous, not like a man in his 70s. I thanked and praised God in my heart!

I read another passage of God’s words later that helped me understand my corruption better. Almighty God says: **“No matter how many things happen to them, the type of person who is an antichrist never tries to address them by searching for the truth in God’s words, much less tries to see things through God’s words—which is wholly because they do not believe that every line of God’s words is the truth. No matter how the house of God fellowships the truth, the antichrists remain unreceptive, and in consequence lack the correct mindset no matter what situation they are faced with; in particular, when it comes to how they approach God and the truth, the antichrists stubbornly refuse to put aside their notions. The God they believe in is the God that performs signs and wonders, the supernatural God. Any that can perform signs and wonders—be it Bodhisattva, Buddha, or Mazu—they call God. ... In the minds of antichrists, God should be worshiped while hiding behind an altar, eating the foods that people offer, inhaling the incense that they burn, extending a helping hand when they are in trouble, showing Himself to be omnipotent and providing immediate**

assistance to them within the bounds of what is comprehensible to them, and satisfying their needs, when people ask for help and are earnest in their entreaties. To the antichrists, only a god such as this is the true God. Everything that God does today, meanwhile, is met with the antichrists' disdain. And why is that? Judging by the nature essence of the antichrists, what they require is not the work of watering, shepherding, and salvation that the Creator performs upon the creatures of God, but prosperity and success in all things, to not be punished in this world, and to go to heaven when they die. Their point of view and needs confirm their essence of hostility to the truth" (The

Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Fifteen: They Do Not Believe in the Existence of God, and They Deny the Essence of Christ (Part One)). God exposes antichrists for hating the truth. No matter how many years they eat and drink God's words, they never view anything according to God's words. They believe in God but don't pursue the truth; they just want miracles. They're always demanding that the God in their heart solve their problems and give them what they want, that everything go their way in this life, and that they live forever in the next. Their faith is entirely for blessings. My perspective on pursuit in my faith was exactly the same as an antichrist's. I was worshiping God as if He were an idol. Usually, when we encountered a difficulty or had a health problem, I'd say a prayer asking God to watch over us and solve our problems. I thought God should give us whatever we needed, that He should meet our every demand. This is what God was in my mind. By exploiting God to meet my demands, wasn't that deceiving and blaspheming Him? And it's not the Age of Grace anymore, so God doesn't do the work of healing the sick and casting out demons. His work today is judgment and chastisement. It's to resolve humanity's corrupt dispositions, to save us from Satan's influence. But I didn't love the truth or treasure

God's work. I just kept demanding grace and blessings from God. In essence, I was a nonbeliever. I'd followed God for years, enjoying the watering, sustenance of God's word, and the care and protection of God, but I didn't pursue the truth or try to repay God's love. I even made unreasonable demands of God. That kind of pursuit on my part was being an enemy of God, and I would have definitely ended up punished by God. Realizing this frightened me. I didn't want to continue down that wrong path, but wanted to confess and repent.

Later on, through reading about Job's experience, I gained even more. I learned how to face and go through trials when they occur. I read more in God's words: **"Job did not talk of trades with God, and made no requests or demands of God. His praising of God's name was because of the great power and authority of God in ruling all things, and it was not dependent on whether he gained blessings or was struck by disaster. He believed that regardless of whether God blesses people or brings disaster upon them, God's power and authority will not change, and thus, regardless of a person's circumstances, God's name should be praised. That man is blessed by God is because of God's sovereignty, and when disaster befalls man, so, too, it is because of God's sovereignty. God's power and authority rule over and arrange everything about man; the vagaries of man's fortune are the manifestation of God's power and authority, and regardless of one's viewpoint, God's name should be praised. This is what Job experienced and came to know during the years of his life. All of Job's thoughts and actions reached the ears of God and arrived before God, and were seen as important by God. God cherished this knowledge of Job, and treasured Job for having such a heart. This heart awaited God's command always, and in all places, and no matter what the time or**

place it welcomed whatever befell him. Job made no demands of God. What he demanded of himself was to wait for, accept, face, and obey all of the arrangements that came from God; Job believed this to be his duty, and it was precisely what was wanted by God. Job had never seen God, nor heard Him speak any words, issue any commands, give any teachings, or instruct him of anything. In the words of today, for him to be able to possess such a knowledge and attitude toward God when God had given him no enlightenment, guidance, or provision with regard to the truth—this was precious, and for him to demonstrate such things was enough for God, and his testimony was commended and cherished by God. Job had never seen God or heard God personally utter any teachings to him, but to God his heart and he himself were far more precious than those people who, before God, were only able to talk in terms of deep theory, who were only able to boast, and speak of offering sacrifices, but who had never had a true knowledge of God, and had never truly feared God. For Job's heart was pure, and not hidden from God, and his humanity was honest and kind-hearted, and he loved justice and that which was positive. Only a man like this who was possessed of such a heart and humanity was able to follow the way of God, and capable of fearing God and shunning evil. Such a man could see God's sovereignty, could see His authority and power, and was able to achieve obedience to His sovereignty and arrangements. Only a man such as this could truly praise God's name. That is because he did not look at whether God would bless him or bring disaster upon him, because he knew that everything is controlled by the hand of God, and that for man to worry is a sign of foolishness, ignorance, and irrationality, of doubt toward the fact of God's sovereignty over all things, and of not fearing God. Job's knowledge

was precisely what God wanted” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God’s Work, God’s Disposition, and God Himself II). I saw in God’s words that Job believed all things, all affairs were ruled by God. Whether he was blessed or suffered calamity, everything came from God. When he was tested, his family’s wealth and all his children were taken away, and he was covered with boils, he still didn’t complain at all, but praised God’s name, saying, “Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah” (Job 1:21). There were no transactions or demands in Job’s faith. He praised God’s power because he believed in God’s sovereignty. He believed that everything God does is good. Job was inherently honest and kind in character, leaving me guilty and ashamed. Compared with Job, I was so terribly lacking. Job only knew about God from what he’d heard; he hadn’t experienced the watering and sustenance of God’s words, but faced with trials, he didn’t blame God. Whether he was blessed or facing disaster, he could accept it from God and submit. Comparing myself to that, I’d eaten and drunk lots of God’s words but didn’t know to repay God’s love. When I got God’s grace and blessings, I believed in His power and authority. When my wife got ill and died, I became doubtful about God’s power and authority. I wasn’t submitting to God. I was also arguing with Him. There was no place for God in my heart, and I didn’t believe in God’s rule or arrangements. I saw that my praise for God’s authority and might was based on my assessment of my own blessings and calamities. I couldn’t unconditionally submit to God’s rule and arrangements. When a difficulty arose, I argued with God, even resisting and making a fuss. Compared with Job, I didn’t have the slightest humanity or reason. It was disgusting and odious to God. I didn’t want to hurt Him anymore. I swore that no matter what situation God set up later, whether I was blessed or suffered misfortune, I would follow Job’s example and never bargain with God

again, fully submitting to His rule and arrangements. Even if I didn't gain the truth and was cast out in the end, I wouldn't complain. After a little while I wasn't in such a dangerous situation, and I could attend gatherings again. I could eat and drink God's words with brothers and sisters and live a church life. The church also arranged a duty for me. I'm really happy now.

My wife's death revealed a lot of my own rebelliousness. The judgment and revelations of God's words allowed me to see my despicable pursuit of blessings in my faith. I stopped putting my effort into that mistaken path. Also, I came to understand, my wife died because her lifespan had ended. Facing that appropriately causes my pain to go away. What I need to do now is diligently pursue the truth and achieve dispositional change. Whether I'm blessed or suffer misfortune, I should listen to God's words, and submit to His rule and arrangements.

44. A Secret Hotel Interrogation

By Song Ping, China

One day in February 2013, a sister and I made an appointment to go to a gathering. At about two in the afternoon, as I was waiting for her near a shoe store, I saw a man looking at me from time to time while talking on the phone, and I felt something was wrong. Just as I was about to leave, I heard “Don’t move!” I saw four or five people rushing toward me, and I thought, “Oh no, it’s the police!” I tried to run away, but two men caught up with me, knocked me to the ground, and then shoved me into a car, where I saw three other sisters who were being arrested with me.

The police took us to the police station and ordered us to stand by the walls of the yard. I was very nervous. I prayed to God earnestly, and thought of God’s words: **“Do not fear, the Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He stands behind you and He is your shield”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 26). Indeed, with God at my side, what did I have to fear? I had to rely on God to experience this environment. Slowly, I managed to calm myself. After that, a policewoman forced me to strip to be searched, and deliberately made me do a squat with my legs apart. I felt humiliated and angry.

The next night, the police took me to a six-story hotel. They had rented the top three floors of the hotel and converted them into a secret interrogation center to detain and torture believers in God. When I got to the sixth floor, I saw more than 20 brothers and sisters standing in a row, and I was shocked: So many people had been arrested! It seemed that the Communist Party had arrested them all at the same time. I didn’t know how the police would treat us, so I silently prayed to God, asking God to protect

us so that we could stand firm. The police then separated us for interrogation.

At five in the morning on the third day, a fat policeman came in and said in a scolding tone, “The man I was interrogating is a leader, and he was a stubborn one. The interrogation didn’t end until two or three o’clock.” He proudly gestured as he continued, “First, I kicked him hard in the face, and then I kicked him hard on the other side of his face, and then, I slapped him over and over with both hands.” He shook his hands and continued his angry complaining, “I hit him so hard it hurt my hands, so I picked up half a bottle of mineral water and hit across his face until I couldn’t move my arms. His whole face was deformed. He was completely unrecognizable.” I was horrified by the policeman’s performance. My heart was pounding, and I felt especially angry, “These policemen are so cruel, if they beat me like they beat my brother, could I bear it?” I didn’t dare to think about it any further. I quickly prayed to God to ask Him to protect the brother who was beaten, and also protect me, so that we could have the confidence to experience this environment.

On the morning of the fourth day, the police took me to the police station. A policeman surnamed Wu asked me what my position in the church was. I said I was an ordinary believer. He stood up abruptly and said, “I guess you won’t tell the truth if you don’t feel some pain!” He ordered me to straighten my arms, squat down, stand up, and then repeat the motion. After doing this for a long time, I was so tired that I was sweating profusely, and my legs were sore. I fell to the ground. He sneered and said, “You know something? No matter how tough people are, here, they have to bow down to me. Are you a leader? Who is your superior?” When I didn’t say anything, he ordered me to squat. After squatting for just a few minutes, my legs started shaking, they were swollen, and soon, I collapsed. He asked

me to get up and continue squatting, and I repeated it more than 800 times. A policeman said menacingly, “Look at how sweaty you are. You look pathetic. Why are you suffering like this? Where is this God? If you tell us what you know, you won’t have to suffer. If you don’t, you will suffer more than you know.” Listening to the policeman’s words, I felt disgusted. I glanced at him and said I didn’t know anything. They handcuffed my hands behind my back to the tiger bench. After being handcuffed for just a while, I felt tightness in my chest and difficulty breathing. I was almost suffocating. I asked them to take off the handcuffs, and after a long time, they finally opened them. Later, a police officer came in and said, “Try to understand your situation. Everyone else confessed. It’s stupid to sit here and hold out by yourself, isn’t it? Tell me what you know now and we’ll let you leave.” Then he took out a few photos and asked me to identify the people in them. He said, “These people were all arrested, and they said they knew you. Do you know them? What are their jobs in the church?” I thought, “If the brothers and sisters really admit to knowing me, but I say I don’t know them, the police will definitely not let me off. But if I say I know them, I’ll be betraying my brothers and sisters. That would make me a Judas who betrays God. What should I do?” At this time, I remembered a passage of God’s word: **“At all times, My people should be on guard against the cunning schemes of Satan, guarding the gate of My house for Me ... so as to avoid falling into Satan’s trap, at which time it would be too late for regrets”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 3). I realized this was one of Satan’s tricks. The police might be using this method to deceive me and make me betray my brothers and sisters, and betray God. I couldn’t fall for it. Even if my brothers and sisters admitted they knew me, I still couldn’t betray them. With this in mind, I said I didn’t know them.

The police officer surnamed Wu saw that I wasn't fooled and said angrily, "I'd like to see just how stubborn you are!" Then he ordered me to get up and handcuffed my hands to the metal bars covering the hallway window. My body was suspended in the air, my wrists were in unbearable pain, and meanwhile, the police looked at me and laughed. After a while, they took me down and told me to continue squatting. That night, the police took me back to the hotel. The next morning, the police officer surnamed Wu said, "Starting today, I will handcuff you to the window. If you don't tell the truth, you won't even get to eat." After that, they handcuffed one of my hands to the metal bars. From time to time, they came to ask me about the details of my church. When one of the police saw that I still wasn't talking, he slapped me hard with a folder, and deliberately opened the door so I could hear the sounds of the other sisters being tortured. Hearing their cries of agony, I felt heartbroken and very angry.

Four days later, a policeman surnamed Mu took my notebook, pointed at the numbers on it, and asked me if they were the cell phone numbers of my brothers and sisters. When I didn't answer, he shouted loudly, "Even if you don't say a word, this notebook is enough to sentence you!" He took out a photo, pointed at the person in it, and asked me if he was the leader of the church. He then took out three pictures of host homes for the church, and then he asked me to identify them. I knew all these homes, but I said I didn't recognize them. He added, "We'll put you in a car and take you there. You only need to point us to the location. And we'll keep it secret for you, no one will know you gave the information." Seeing I still wasn't saying anything, he said to the police next to him, "Strip her naked, hang her so that she's facing out from the window, so that passers-by can see. Then, take a picture of her and post it on the Internet, say she is a Judas, and say she told us everything." After that, he came up to take off my clothes. I was

very afraid. If he really did this and posted my photo on the Internet, my relatives and friends would see it. How could I live after that? I begged him not to take off my clothes, but he sneered and said, “What? Are you afraid?” Then all of them burst into laughter. Seeing their complacent appearances, I realized this was another of Satan’s tricks, so I quickly calmed down and cried out to God. At this time, I remembered a hymn of God’s word titled **“You Should Forsake All for the Truth”**: **“You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do. You must not throw away the truth for the sake of a peaceful family life, and you must not lose your life’s dignity and integrity for the sake of momentary enjoyment”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). God’s words gave me confidence and strength. I believed in God and followed the right path in life. Being tortured and humiliated because of my belief in God was nothing to be ashamed of. I was being persecuted for righteousness, and God approved of this. If I yielded to Satan and betrayed God to protect my reputation, that would be the most shameful thing I could do, and I would truly lose my human dignity. I hated myself for being spineless and begging for mercy from Satan, thereby turning myself into Satan’s laughingstock. I swore to myself that no matter how these wicked police humiliated me, even if they really stripped my clothes off, I would never bow down to them and beg for mercy, and I would never become a Judas. When the police saw that I was no longer afraid, they were so angry that they handcuffed both of my hands to the metal bars. A policewoman shouted, “Weren’t you going to strip her naked? Take everything off, so you can see all everything.” The group of policemen laughed wildly, like demons from the underworld. At

that time, my feet were in the air, and my weight was on my wrists, which hurt as if they were about to break. I prayed earnestly to God in my heart, asking Him to give me confidence and strength so that I could endure the torture of the police and not compromise with Satan. After more than half an hour, the police let me down. My feet were numb and unfeeling, and I fell to the floor as soon as my feet touched it. A police officer said viciously, "Think about your situation. If you still won't talk, we have more tricks to deal with you." After that, they left.

Two days later, a fat policeman came in. As soon as he entered, he said to the two policemen who were guarding me, "Do you know why you can't break this woman? It's that you're too soft, and you're not using the right techniques. Today, I'll teach you a few tricks, and show you how I get it done!" He asked me to squat, and then half squat, and then repeat it to the point where I lost all my strength and collapsed. He then told the two police officers to each grab one of my arms, push me down and lift me up, and continue torturing me like this repeatedly. Looking at their fierce expressions, I knew that heavier torture was coming next. I thought of my servile appearance when I bowed to Satan and begged for mercy two days prior due to my fear of humiliation, so I made up my mind that today, I would rely on God and bear witness for Him before Satan. I prayed to God in my heart, "God, I don't know what other means the police will use to torture me, but I wish to create strong and resounding testimony for You, so I ask that You give me confidence and strength." After just a little while, they became so tired and sweaty that they couldn't lift me. As soon as their hands released me, I fell heavily to the floor. They ordered me to get up and squat down again and again. The fat policeman sneered and said, "She looks too hot. Pour some cold water on her. I'm sure she'll like that." Then they poured cold water on me until I was completely soaked. But the

amazing thing was that I felt a hot steam rising from me, and I didn't feel cold at all. I knew that this was God's protection of me. I continuously thanked God in my heart, and I felt my faith in God grow.

Then the two policemen dragged me up and handcuffed my left hand to the metal bars. My wrist was already injured from being hung up before, so when I was handcuffed this time, it hurt even more. The police laughed when they saw my pain, and I didn't want them to see my weakness, so I endured the pain without making a sound. To reduce the pain, I strained to stand on my tiptoes. One of my toes could still touch the ground, but barely, yet when a police officer saw this, he pressed his foot against my heel, suspending my body for a while, and then moved his foot, causing a violent yanking on my hand that was particularly painful. Seeing that I was still silent, the police tied a rope to one of my feet, pulled up on the rope to hang my body in midair, and then suddenly let go. They did that repeatedly. Just like that, my body swayed from side to side, and it felt like a knife cutting into my wrist. As this continued, I prayed to God urgently in my heart. Later, the fat policeman brought in a rattan chair. The other two policemen each grabbed one of my legs, put them on top of the chair's back, and then yanked the chair away. All of my weight fell on my wrist. The pain was nearly unbearable. Thirty or forty minutes later, the police took my left hand down, handcuffed my right hand to the metal bars, and continued the torture. I started to feel short of breath, and thought, "I don't know how much longer the police will torture me. If they keep me suspended like this, my hands will be crippled, and if my hands really become crippled, how will I survive in the future?" The more I thought, the more miserable I felt, until it was even difficult for me to breathe. I felt that I couldn't bear it any longer, so I prayed earnestly to God, "God, my flesh is too weak. I can't hold on any longer. Please give me strength, so that I can stand firm and

humiliate Satan.” At that moment, I remembered a passage of God’s words: **“On the road to Jerusalem, Jesus was in agony, as if a knife were being twisted in His heart, yet He had not the slightest intention of going back on His word; always there was a powerful force compelling Him onward to where He would be crucified. Ultimately, He was nailed to the cross and became the likeness of sinful flesh, completing the work of the redemption of mankind. He broke free of the shackles of death and Hades. Before Him, mortality, hell, and Hades lost their power, and were vanquished by Him”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How to Serve in Harmony With God’s Will). God’s word gave me strength. To redeem humankind, the Lord Jesus was crucified and suffered great humiliation and pain, yet He did so without hesitating. God’s love for people is too great, and in this, God has already set an example for us. But when I faced the torture of the police, I didn’t think about how to stand witness. Instead, I thought about my own body. I was so selfish and despicable! With this in mind, I felt ashamed and embarrassed. This time, I was determined that I would satisfy God. Thinking of God’s love inspired me and gave me the courage to fight Satan to the end. At this time, one of the police saw me with my eyes closed and said, “She’s praying to their God, and she gets a burst of strength every time she does that.” Another poked my eyelids with a thin metal rod. As he poked my eyes, he said, “Open your eyes. You’re not allowed to pray to your God.” When he saw that I was still silent, he slapped my face with a belt three or four times, but I didn’t feel any pain at all. After more than half an hour, a policeman said, “Cuff her up higher, so she can’t touch the ground. Let’s see how she enjoys that.” Then, two police lifted me up, but just as another opened the handcuffs and was about to close them around a higher bar, the handcuffs suddenly broke and couldn’t latch. They tried another pair, but they still didn’t work. I knew this was

God's protection, and I thanked God in my heart. The police were too tired to hold me up anymore, so they let go, and I suddenly fell to the ground. They had tortured me for nearly two hours, and I was so exhausted that I lay there motionless. Looking back on the whole process of the police torturing me, I clearly saw the vile and evil nature of the police. I also felt God's care for me, and I became more confident in God. After a while, a police officer came over and kicked me a few times. Seeing that I was still motionless, he applied an entire bottle of cooling ointment on my eyes, but I didn't feel a thing. The policeman saw that I wasn't responding and left. I knew this was God's protection of me.

At about seven in the evening, a police officer came in. When he saw that I was soaking wet and shivering from the cold, he reprimanded the other police. With a false air of kindness, he asked them to bring dry clothes to change for me, and then gave me a bowl of noodles, after which he tried to ingratiate himself with me. He said, "You're so far from your home, and now you can't go back. Don't your children miss you? What are you doing believing in God at such a young age? I heard you're a leader, so just tell us what we want to know, and I promise we'll let you go. You'll be able to go home and be with your family." Once I heard this, I realized he was trying to deceive me into trusting him and telling him the information about the church. I said, "I've already told you all I know. I don't know anything else." He suddenly slapped the table, stood up, and said viciously, "Don't think we can't do anything to you if you don't talk! The central government ordered us to completely eradicate believers in Almighty God. We're going to eliminate your organization. If you don't start cooperating, you will be sentenced." Then he left. At this time, the policeman surnamed Wu said, "You'd better just do the smart thing and give us the information we want. That way you won't have to suffer so much." I thought, "The police won't

stop if they don't get the information they want. If I can't stand the torture and become a Judas, that would be betraying God, so I might as well kill myself." I was having thoughts of suicide. At that moment, I realized my state was wrong, so I silently prayed to God, "God! My flesh is weak, and I want to escape from this environment by dying. I am too weak, and my stature is too small. Please enlighten and guide me, and give me the confidence and strength to stand firm." After I prayed, I suddenly realized I had files of God's word on my MP5 player. I said to the young police officer, "Give me my MP5. There's something I want to show you on it." He thought I was about to confess, so he handed it to me. I turned on the MP5 player, where I saw a passage of God's words: **"Those whom God refers to as 'overcomers' are those who are still able to stand witness and maintain their confidence and devotion to God when under the influence of Satan and while being laid siege to by Satan, that is, when they find themselves amidst the forces of darkness. If you are still able to keep a pure heart before God and maintain your genuine love for God no matter what, then you are standing witness in front of God, and this is what God refers to as being an 'overcomer'"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Maintain Your Devotion to God). From God's words, I understood God's will. When I face persecution and tribulation, what God wants is my faith and loyalty. God wants me to bear victorious testimony while under siege by Satan. These wicked police tortured me this way to force me to betray God. If I killed myself, losing my testimony, that would be falling for Satan's tricks, and failing to live up to the effort God had expended for me—that would hurt God too much. I couldn't die, I had to live on, be strong, stand firm and satisfy God. Thinking of this, I felt a sense of strength. I fell to my knees and offered a prayer of thanks to God. The young policeman said in surprise, "You're quite brave, daring to kneel

down and pray here!” I ignored him. After I prayed, he asked me, “Have you made up your mind? Once you’ve thought it through, tell me what you know.” I resolutely said, “I’ve said everything I need to say. I have nothing else to say.” The officer surnamed Wu became so furious that he picked up the handcuffs and handcuffed one of my hands to the metal bars. The young police officer said, “Prayer is really powerful. It’s like it makes her a totally different person. She doesn’t fear anything, and doesn’t say anything.” When I heard that, I thanked God from the bottom of my heart, and I became more confident that I could stand firm.

The next morning, when the police saw that none of their tactics worked on me, they said, “Starting today, we’ll handcuff you to the window every day, and we won’t let you eat, drink, or sleep. Let’s see how many days you can last.” I silently prayed to God, “God, I believe that my life and death are in Your hands. Please protect me. Even if I die, I would stand firm and bear witness for You!” After that, the police took turns watching me, and they woke me up loudly when they saw me dozing off. On the third day, a man across the road noticed me handcuffed to the window and shouted at me, “Have you been kidnapped by someone? If so, wave your hand at me, and I’ll call 110 for you.” I thought, “I was imprisoned here by the police. Do you think the police do good things for ordinary people? The Communist Party police are just a pack of bestial demons.” After a few more days, more and more people downstairs noticed me handcuffed to the window. They were pointing at me and going on and on about it, so the police moved me to the opposite room.

One night, around March 20, I was taken to a special investigations office. There, three police subjected me to brainwashing until after four in the morning, when a police officer surnamed Liu said to me, “The Church of Almighty God has grown to several million people now, and this directly

endangers the interests of the Communist Party. If we don't suppress it, who will listen to the Communist Party? President Xi personally ordered that 'Eastern Lightning' be completely eradicated, and that those who believe in Almighty God receive reeducation, so that they give up their beliefs and accept the Party's education and leadership. If they refuse, they will be sentenced to prison, and no one will care if they're beaten to death." He continued, "Right now, the entire province and the whole country are arresting members of The Church of Almighty God. Eventually, it will be uprooted. If you think you can continue believing in Almighty God, I'm telling you now that it's impossible!" I said, "We believers in God simply go to gatherings, read God's word, pursue dispositional change to become honest people, and follow the right path in life. How can we harm the interests of the Communist Party? If you don't believe me, read the words of Almighty God and you'll know. You've confiscated so many books of Almighty God's word, so why not open one of them and take a look?" The other police officer said loudly, "Don't tell us about believing in God! We don't believe in this, we only believe in the Communist Party and President Xi." Then he threatened me, "Think hard about it. If you tell us what we want to know, I promise not to sentence you to prison. We'll let you go home right away. If you still don't understand your situation, I'll send you to a mental hospital. The doctor will give you an injection every day, so that you lose your mind. You'll live with all kinds of mentally ill people, then they will beat you and scold you every day. We'll see how long you can last in there." After I heard this, I was very scared. If I was sent to a mental hospital, I would be around mentally ill people every day. Living with such people, even a normal person would go crazy. When the police saw that I was silent, they threatened me again, "Go back and think about it. Write

down everything we should know. Based on the evidence we have, we can sentence you to at least three to seven years.”

Back to the hotel, thinking about what the police said, I couldn't sleep at all. The thought of the mentally ill chasing me around and beating me, and the image of myself going crazy and running around the street naked made me break out in a cold sweat and bolt upright in bed. I cried and prayed to God, “God! I'm afraid of becoming a lunatic. Please help me, lead me, and calm me. No matter what kind of circumstances I face, I will never betray You.” After I prayed, I thought of a passage of God's words: **“When people are ready to sacrifice their lives, everything becomes trifling, and no one can get the better of them. What could be more important than life? Thus, Satan becomes incapable of doing any more in people, there is nothing it can do with man”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of “God's Words to the Entire Universe”, Chapter 36). As I contemplated God's word, I gradually calmed down. If I was willing to risk my life, what suffering couldn't I endure? My life and death were in God's hands, and I would not become mentally ill without God's permission. After dawn, I took out a pen and paper, and wrote one line, “High walls and big courtyards, rotting forever in prison.” When the police officer saw it, his face changed. He was so angry that he slammed the door and left.

After more than a month, I was sent to the detention house. Because the interrogation was still inconclusive, they sentenced me to residential surveillance for six months, and warned me, “You are a criminal suspect now, and you have no freedom anywhere. If you believe in God again, you will be sentenced if we catch you.” The police called my house from time to time, and people from the Religious Affairs Bureau came to my house to

question me about my belief in God. I didn't dare to contact my brothers and sisters, and I couldn't live the church life. Due to being tortured by the police, I couldn't bend my fingers on both hands, and my wrists hurt so badly that I couldn't move them. I didn't even have the strength to pick up a comb, and even now I don't have any strength in my wrists.

After being arrested, persecuted, and tortured by the Communist Party, I clearly saw its brutal, evil, and Heaven-defying nature. I also clearly saw that it is Satan, who resists God and harms people. At the same time, I saw that God is almighty and wise, and I felt God's protection and care for me. It was God's words that led me, step by step, to gain victory over Satan, and stand firm. Thanks be to God!

45. Leaving the Madhouse

By Xiaocao, China

In January 2012 I accepted Almighty God's gospel of the last days. After believing, the serious lumbar muscle strain and frozen shoulder I had been suffering with due to overwork in my business miraculously improved. My husband and son were thrilled—before, my arms had hurt so much that I could barely lift them, even brushing my hair or getting dressed had been difficult, and medicine had made no difference. Seeing that I'd got better, they were really supportive of my faith. But several months later, my husband saw some lies the Communist Party had spread online to smear, attack and condemn The Church of Almighty God, and from then on he began to oppose my faith. He said, "The government is against this God of yours. If you end up arrested for it, it could impact our son's career. You should give this up." One time, when I'd just come back from sharing the gospel, he said with a dark look on his face, "The National Security Brigade called me in and asked if you're a believer, and if so, you need to hand in your books about God. They also asked me to identify people from a bunch of photos. You're bound to get taken in if you keep on believing." I responded, "Faith in God is the right path in life, and I haven't done anything illegal. They'd have no right!" He said, "You're so naive! The CCP especially has it out for you believers. If you keep believing, they could arrest you and rough you up, then you'll see how ruthless they are. You can't believe anymore!" With my husband opposed to my faith, it would definitely become harder to walk this path. I prayed to God in my heart and asked Him to guide me on the path ahead. I also resolved that no matter how my husband stood in my way, I would never give up my faith.

One day in December 2012, I was arrested and detained because an evil person reported me for preaching the gospel. The day they let me out, an officer warned me, “Once you get home, you’d better give up your faith. If you don’t, you’ll definitely be sentenced when you’re caught!” After half an hour or so, my husband came to pick me up looking really upset, with an awful look on his face. He went straight to the police office. I had no idea what they were talking about in there. When we arrived home, I saw my brother, sister, and brother-in-law all standing in the yard. My brother was a county-level leader, and he’d seen all sorts of Communist Party’s lies online condemning and blaspheming the Church. He tried to persuade me to give up my faith, and said that if I didn’t give it up it would implicate my son, and also would implicate him and lead to him losing his position as an official. I knew they were certainly there to try to push me into giving up my faith, so I said a quick prayer, asking God to protect me from these disturbances. My brother said, all smiles, “You should give up this God stuff. Stay at home and behave yourself. Taking good care of this family is the best thing you can do. Your son has a good job, and that will be in danger if you keep on with this. He’ll hate you forever.” Then my brother-in-law yelled at me, gesticulating, “Faith in God? Where is God? I don’t believe in Him and I have a perfectly good life!” Then my husband said angrily, “It wasn’t easy for our son to get a good job, to get noticed. What if he loses his job because of your faith?” My sister came over and pressed me, “You should let go of this. Your husband is so good to you and your son has a good job. That should be enough. Just take good care of your family.” Hearing all this, I thought, “My husband and I worked so hard to earn enough money for our son’s education, and now he’s found a good living, which was no easy task. The CCP is using my son’s work to intimidate me into betraying God, and if he really does lose his job because of this, won’t

he hate me for the rest of his life?” But if I gave up my faith, that would be betraying God! As a believer I had learned some truths, and I knew worshiping God as a created being was perfectly natural and justified, and was the right path to take. God had healed my injuries. Having enjoyed so many blessings granted by God, I couldn’t be so devoid of conscience. So, I silently prayed to God in my heart, “God, my family is trying to force me to give up my faith, and I feel awful. Please give me faith and strength.” Then I remembered these words from God: **“In every step of work that God does within people, externally it appears to be interactions between people, as if born of human arrangements or from human disturbance. But behind the scenes, every step of work, and everything that happens, is a wager made by Satan before God, and requires people to stand firm in their testimony to God. Take when Job was tried, for example: Behind the scenes, Satan was making a bet with God, and what happened to Job was the deeds of men and the disturbance of men. Behind every step of work that God does in you is Satan’s wager with God—behind it all is a battle”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). I saw that behind my family ganging up on me, it was actually Satan tempting and attacking me. My family had been taken in by the Party’s rumors and lies and was using my son’s work to intimidate me so I’d betray God. I couldn’t fall for Satan’s trick, and had to stand witness for God. Whatever job my son had was entirely presided over and arranged by God. No one could change that. So I said, “Having faith is right and proper, and it’s the right path in life. I haven’t broken any laws. The Communist Party arresting me and dragging you into it is the Party’s own evil. You shouldn’t oppress me along with it or stand in the way of my faith. All of you know, before I believed in God, my injuries were so bad I couldn’t even take care of myself. I completely recovered

after gaining faith, and this was all thanks to God's grace. If I betrayed God, would I even have any conscience? Not only have I recovered from my injuries since gaining faith, but I've also come to understand so many truths, my heart is full and I experience so much joy. These are all wonderful things. But you don't understand, and you stand on the Communist Party's side, opposing my faith. You're just addled, and you can't tell right from wrong! No matter how opposed you are, I am committed to my path of faith." My husband, in a total huff, pointed at me, saying, "You're a lost cause!" Then he and my brother exchanged a look and went to the back of the house together. I was confused. What were they talking about so sneakily? Before long, my brother returned and shot my sister a look, then said with a secretive smile on his face, "Let's go get something to eat!" My sister and her son-in-law came right over to me and pulled me toward the car by my hands, one on each side. I felt like something was off. I shook their hands off and said I didn't want to go, but they just pushed me into the car. The car stopped after about half an hour of driving, and to my surprise, I saw we were at a mental hospital. My brother and my husband got out of the car. I wanted to run, but I had been locked in. I saw them walking toward the hospital office and felt angry and disgusted. I couldn't believe they'd taken me to a place like this. How heartless they were. So-called loved ones! I thought back on how, when my husband met me at the police station, he'd spoken to the police alone for a bit, and how my family had been exchanging meaningful looks when they said we were going to eat. I realized that this was very likely a plan hatched by the police. They were doing this to get me to betray God. I was incredibly upset, with tears welling up in my eyes. I said to my sister, indignant, "You're taking me here to have me tormented, just because I believe in God. You're the crazy ones! What you're doing is offensive to

Heaven and reason. You'll get your comeuppance!" Just then, a couple of orderlies came out of the hospital, carrying restraints to put on me. My husband and brother just stood there looking at me, without saying a word. I was heartbroken and full of despair. I'd never in my wildest dreams imagined that my brother and my husband, just to protect their own interests, to avoid being implicated, would actually listen to the Communist Party's lies and have me put in a mental hospital where I'd be tormented, with no thought for whether I lived or died, when I was perfectly well. They weren't any kind of loved ones—they were demons! At that thought, I couldn't hold my tears back anymore. I didn't even want to look at them. I said to the orderlies indignantly, "There's nothing wrong with me! They tricked me into coming here and being treated like a mental patient just because I believe in God. You haven't even looked into this. Why are you restraining me?" But they completely ignored me. They admitted me as a severely troubled patient and locked me up in Ward 1.

All the corridors, doors and windows on Ward 1 had metal bars welded over them. My room was about 40 or 50 square feet and it was completely bare. There was just a single bed with a dirty quilt that had traces of urine on it. There was a pungent odor of urine. There was a unisex bathroom in the hall that was kept locked. I had to find an orderly every time I wanted to use the bathroom, and if they were busy, they wouldn't open the door. I just had to hold it. The hospital was constantly filled with the sound of the mental patients wailing. Sometimes they'd sing or cry, or start shouting, "Let me out! Let me out!" They'd also smack the metal bars nonstop. The whole place sounded like it was filled with wailing ghosts and howling wolves. It made my blood run cold, "What kind of place for humans is this? As soon as I had been released by the police, my own family took me to be tormented in a madhouse. This is out of the frying pan and into the fire.

How am I supposed to live like this? If it weren't for the persecution of the CCP, my family wouldn't be treating me this way." I felt worse the more I thought about it, and started to cry sorrowfully. As I cried, I thought about we brothers and sisters in gatherings, singing hymns and praising God. I so wanted to read God's words and do my duty alongside them, but I couldn't get out, and had no idea how long I'd be kept in there. When would my suffering come to an end? I prayed to God, "Oh God, I'm locked up with mental patients. I'm so miserable. God, I don't know how to get through this. Please guide me." After I prayed, I remembered a passage of God's words: **"Because it is embarked upon in a land that opposes God, all of God's work faces tremendous obstacles, and accomplishing many of His words takes time; thus, people are refined as a result of God's words, which is also part of suffering. It is tremendously difficult for God to carry out His work in the land of the great red dragon—but it is through this difficulty that God does one stage of His work, making manifest His wisdom and His wondrous deeds, and using this opportunity to make this group of people complete"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). I understood that in China, believers must undergo many persecutions of the CCP, because the Party is God's mortal enemy, and it will not allow people to have faith and follow God. The Party is madly arresting and persecuting believers, and spreading all sorts of rumors and lies, and condemning The Church of Almighty God, to deceive those who don't know the truth. It implicates believers' family members, destroying their jobs and career prospects, arousing hatred of believers among their families, and using their families to force believers to betray God. The Party is despicably evil! Although undergoing this kind of persecution from the Party caused me great pain, it enabled me to discern the Communist Party's evil essence, and

it was also God testing my faith. I had to lean on God and stand witness to God. At this thought, I prayed to God, asking Him to stay with me and protect me from the affliction of Satan and evil spirits. The more the great red dragon oppressed me, the greater would be my faith in God.

The following day, an orderly brought medication for me to take. Incensed, I told him, “There’s nothing wrong with me. I’m perfectly normal, and I won’t take this!” I insisted that I wouldn’t take it. On the third day, a severely troubled person was admitted, and I was transferred to Ward 3 because Ward 1 didn’t have any spare beds. That ward wasn’t so tightly controlled—I could leave my room for activities. I saw that some of the patients’ pants were so worn that their bottoms were showing, their faces and necks were filthy, and their hair was like a bird’s nest. Some people had clothing that was so dirty it looked oily—it was absolutely nauseating. I had two cellmates in that ward. One was dull-eyed and expressionless, and would sometimes randomly mutter to herself. The other one would pace nonstop in the corridor every morning, smoking. They really frightened me. I was scared that during one of their episodes, they might hit me or pull my hair when I wasn’t paying attention, or they might choke me to death in my sleep, so I never got any deep sleep at night. Every time, I’d silently pray to God over and over, asking Him to protect me. That was the only way I could relax enough to get a bit of restful sleep. An orderly would come by every day and give us our medication, one by one. They would watch us, so I had to take it. Sometimes when they weren’t looking I’d get rid of it. Another patient saw this and said to me, “You can’t do that. I was caught by an orderly throwing out meds once. He smacked me a couple of times, then got a plastic tube that he stuck into my nose, and forced the medicine through that. It was really painful.” I never knew if that woman told the orderlies about me getting rid of my pill, but the hospital staff kept a much

closer eye on patients taking their medication after that. The orderlies would stand at a square table two feet high every day to supervise us, making us open our mouths and using a flashlight to check whether we had swallowed the medicine. I had no choice but to take the pills.

A few days later, the hospital director came by to inspect the rooms and asked me out of the blue, “Is the great disaster on the 21st?” I thought it was really odd, and said, “Only God can say when the disaster will come.” His response was, “I can see you’re really unwell. We need to up your dosage.” After that, I had to take two pills instead of one. I was furious. The director had no idea if there was actually something wrong with me, but just casually doubled my dosage. He had no regard for human life. A hospital should be a place for curing sickness, but it had become a place where the Communist Party could persecute Christians. They were maliciously harming me only because of my faith. I hated the Party through and through.

Ten days after I took the medication, I started feeling really weak, and even walking was difficult. I thought of how I’d only been taking the medicine for several days and was already like this. I worried that if I continued taking it, it would make me sick even though I hadn’t been ill to begin with. And facing all those mental patients every day, being miserable and depressed, I felt like I was about to develop mental problems from the torment. I was praying to God a lot while in that environment, asking Him to guide me and give me faith. I remember one time after a prayer, I thought of the Lord Jesus letting Lazarus out of his tomb. He’d been dead for four days, and his body was already stinking, but God brought him back from the dead with a few words. God is almighty. He presides over mankind’s fate. Wasn’t my life also in God’s hands? I thought of something God said: **“Of everything that occurs in the universe, there is nothing in which I**

do not have the final say. Is there anything that is not in My hands?"

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 1). Whether that medication would make me crazy and when I'd get out was all in God's hands. I had to get through this with my faith and by leaning on God. This thought gave me faith and I no longer felt so afraid.

One evening a couple weeks later, I thought about calling my family to see if I could get out sooner. The next morning, my husband drove to the hospital. I told him this wasn't a place fit for humans, that staying too long would make a sane person crazy, and that he should take me out of there. He called my brother to discuss it, and I could hear my brother say through the phone, "She must give up her faith! First have her sign a guarantee to give up her faith, and then she can come out. She can die in there if she keeps her faith." I'd never imagined that my brother would say something like that. It was really chilling. What kind of family was this? This was merely a devil! Seeing my husband had no intentions of getting me out, I thought, "If he just discards me here and abandons me, never to be released, then how will I practice my faith?" So I feigned agreement. After he took me home, he followed me around constantly every day. He wouldn't let me go to gatherings or read God's words. Sometimes during my afternoon rest he'd even come in to see if I was reading God's words. All I could do was secretly read God's words with my MP5 player when he wasn't paying attention. Then one morning he caught me when I was charging it. He took it away and yelled at me, furious, "How can you still believe? If you're caught and you go to prison and our son loses his job because of you, how will you be able to face him? You're not allowed to follow God anymore!" As he said this, he gave me a hard shove and my head hit against the side of the bed with a thud. I thought: I am just believing in God. I haven't done anything wrong, but this is the way he is treating me. He not only had me

institutionalized, but now he is raising a hand against me, and won't let me read God's words. Feeling worse and worse, I prayed to God, "Oh God! My husband is coercing me terribly, and I am weak. I don't know how to stay on this path. Please guide me!" After I prayed, I thought of God's words: **"Today, most people do not have that knowledge. They believe that suffering is without value, they are renounced by the world, their home life is troubled, they are not beloved of God, and their prospects are bleak. The suffering of some people reaches an extreme, and their thoughts turn to death. This is not true love for God; such people are cowards, they have no perseverance, they are weak and powerless! God is eager for man to love Him, but the more man loves Him, the greater man's suffering, and the more man loves Him, the greater man's trials. ... Thus, during these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). By pondering God's words, it became clear to me that even though the coercion and tribulations I faced were causing me suffering, without the disclosure of these situations I would not see my true stature, nor would I be able to have true faith. There was value in suffering these hardships. But I didn't understand God's will, and because I couldn't endure the suffering I became negative and weak. I saw what a coward I was. The revelation of facts also let me see some things clearly. To press me to abandon my faith in God, my husband didn't care if I lived or died, personally taking me to a mental institution, and now even hitting me—I truly saw that he was a God-hating, anti-God demon. I remembered what God said: **"Believers and unbelievers**

are not compatible; rather, they are opposed to one another” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). My husband and I were two different kinds of people on two different paths. I would keep following God no matter how my husband oppressed me. I would no longer be held back by him. So I said to him, “Let’s get a divorce. You’re on a worldly path, pursuing money, and I’m on a path of faith. We’re on different paths and we have nothing in common. You’re afraid for our son, so we should get a divorce. Then my faith won’t impact you two. I don’t need any of our assets. I just need a room, a place to live. As long as I can follow God, I’ll be alright.” He said, “I know you’re a good woman. I don’t want a divorce.” I told him, “If you don’t want a divorce, then give me my freedom. I’m a believer, and you can’t stand in my way.” He said, “You can have your freedom, but first you need to sign an agreement with me that you’ll stop believing in Almighty God!” I said, “I have to keep my faith—I cannot sign that agreement.” He was left speechless. After that, seeing he couldn’t keep me from believing, he didn’t stand in the way of me practicing my faith as much. I was able to live a life of the church and do a duty normally.

Some time passed. Then, one evening, I went to see a sister who lived nearby to discuss watering newcomers. My son showed up right after we’d sat down and said to the sister furiously, “You’re the one who converted my mom!” Then he tried to hit her. I rushed to wrap my arms around him, to hold him back. He dragged me back home in a fit of rage and said angrily, “You’ve got to give this up. Look at what they’re saying about your Church online!” Then he repeated a few of the Communist Party’s lies slandering The Church of Almighty God. After that, he yelled, “Dad, call the mental hospital and send her back in there!” I felt like my head was about to explode when I heard him say that. I’d never imagined that my son would

send his own mother to the mental hospital, all for the sake of his job. It was brutal! I could hear my husband calling the institution, and on the phone I heard them say they were full. My husband hung up and said, "Let's call the police and just have them take her away." My son responded, "She can't be locked up there. How about we just keep her in that dark room where we used to breed rabbits?" Then the two of them forcefully carried me into that room, locked the iron gate and left. Seeing how my husband and son had been deceived by the Party into being so brutal toward me was really chilling, and I hated the Communist Party from the bottom of my heart even more. I thought of God's words: **"For thousands of years this has been the land of filth. It is unbearably dirty, misery abounds, ghosts run rampant everywhere, tricking and deceiving, making groundless accusations, being ruthless and vicious, trampling this ghost town and leaving it littered with dead bodies; the stench of decay covers the land and pervades the air, and it is heavily guarded. Who can see the world beyond the skies? The devil tightly trusses all of man's body, it veils both his eyes, and seals his lips firmly shut. The king of devils has rampaged for several thousand years, right up until today, when it still keeps a close watch on the ghost town, as if it were an impenetrable palace of demons.... Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin!"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). The Party arrests and persecutes Christians, spreads all sorts of rumors and slanders about The Church of Almighty God and implicates their family members. So my family was misled by the Party and went along with its coercion of my faith, even personally taking me to a mental hospital where I was

tormented, and they were now locking me up. A perfectly happy family was reduced to this. The Party was the real ringleader and I hated this devil from the bottom of my heart. Before long, my son got a stool, came and sat outside the iron gate and said, “Mom, you should stop believing in God. You worked really hard when you were in business and funding my education wasn’t easy. Now I’m working and I have some money. How about I pay for you to take a trip?” When he said this, I realized it was a trick from Satan, so I told him, “Before I was a believer, I just wanted to earn money. It was a difficult, exhausting way to live. Now that I’ve found God and understood some truths, my life is much freer and happier. Can’t you two leave me be? I’ll keep my faith even if you reject me as your mother and your father divorces me. I’m committed to this path.” He didn’t say a word in response, but just walked off. I was really grateful to God for strengthening my faith, and I felt really steadfast and at peace. I started singing this hymn: “Almighty true God, my heart belongs to You. Incarceration can only control my body. It cannot stop my footsteps in following You. Painful suffering, a bumpy road, with the guidance of Your words, my heart is without fear, with the company of Your love, my heart is sated” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, A Choice Without Regret). Singing this hymn, I could feel God by my side. Even sitting in that dark little room where I couldn’t see anything around me, I didn’t feel miserable. The next morning, my son unexpectedly opened the gate and let me out, and said, “Mom, we’ll leave you alone now. You can do whatever you want.” When he said that, I knew that Satan had been shamed and defeated, and I gave thanks to God.

Going through arrest by the Communist Party and my family’s oppression helped me fully see the Party’s demonic anti-God essence. It arrests and persecutes believers and spreads all sorts of rumors and lies to

deceive people, leading believers to suffer the coercion and obstruction of their families. It is the mastermind destroying Christians' families. For their own interests, my husband and son went along with the Party, coercing my faith, and even personally had me institutionalized with no thought to whether I lived or died. I fully saw that their essence is one of resisting God, and I'll never let them hold me back again. This experience has shown me that only God loves us, and only God can save us. When I was at my most miserable and helpless, God used His words to enlighten me, to comfort and encourage me, and guide me through those difficult days. Now I've personally experienced that only God's love is true. I am willing to follow God and do my duty well, and I will never regret it.

46. Bearing Witness to God Is Truly Doing a Duty

By Judy, South Korea

Recently, I saw some videos of newcomers' experiential testimonies, and I was very moved. Despite believing for two or three years, they could share their experiential testimonies. I felt quite ashamed, and I began to reflect on why I had believed for many years, yet couldn't testify to God. One day, I came across a passage of God's words: **"What you have experienced and seen surpasses that of the saints and prophets from all ages, but are you able to provide testimony greater than the words of these saints and prophets of times past? What I now bestow upon you surpasses Moses and eclipses David, so likewise I ask that your testimony surpass Moses and that your words be greater than David. I give you a hundredfold—so I likewise ask you to repay Me in kind. You must know I am the One who bestows life unto mankind, and it is you who receive life from Me and must bear witness for Me. This is your duty which I send down upon you and which you ought to do for Me. I have bestowed all My glory unto you, I have bestowed unto you the life that the chosen people, the Israelites, never received. By rights, you ought to bear witness to Me and devote to Me your youth and lay down your life. Whomsoever I bestow My glory unto shall bear Me witness and give their life for Me. This has long been predestined by Me. It is your good fortune that I bestow My glory upon you, and your duty is to testify to My glory. If you were to believe in Me only to gain blessings, then My work would bear little significance, and you would not be fulfilling your duty. ... What you have received is not merely My truth, My way, and My life, but a vision and revelation greater than that of John. You understand many more mysteries, and have also looked**

upon My true countenance; you have accepted more of My judgment and know more of My righteous disposition. And so, though you were born in the last days, your understanding is that of the former and the past, and you have also experienced the things of today, and this was all personally done by Me. What I ask of you is not excessive, for I have given you so much, and you have seen much in Me. Thus, I ask you to bear witness for Me to the saints of ages past, and this is My heart's only desire" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?).

After reading God's word, I was very excited, but I also felt quite guilty. I was excited to be lucky enough to experience God's work and enjoy the supply of God's words, but felt guilty that I had believed in God for many years and enjoyed so much of God's grace, but had no testimony of God. I thought about how in the last days, God has freely given us many truths, reveals and judges our corruption, reminds us, exhorts us, encourages us, and comforts us, but because we do not pursue the truth, and our comprehension ability is poor, God fellowships with us on all aspects of the truth in detail, gives us examples and analogies, and explains it to us from the ground up to ensure we understand. God has expended so much effort and paid such a price for us, and He does so because He wants us to understand the truth and know Him, rid ourselves of our corrupt disposition, and genuinely repent and change. This is the testimony God wants. It has been 30 years since He started His work. He has done so much work and expressed so much truth, and He wants to see our testimony. Even if it is shallow, He accepts if it is real. God hopes that we can share the gains and knowledge we have experienced in His work and write articles of testimony because this is the fruit of God's work and the embodiment of God's effort. Then I thought about myself. Although God had given me so much, I didn't dare think about which aspects of truth I understood and which truth reality

I had entered into, because I only understood much of God's word doctrinally, but hadn't seriously contemplated, practiced, or experienced it. So, when it came to testifying to God and writing articles of testimony, I felt intimidated and diffident, and I made very little effort in this regard. Thinking about how I'd believed for years, yet couldn't write about my experience, and had no testimony, made me very distressed.

Once, a sister asked me if I wanted to practice writing experience testimonials. I agreed at the time, but I just wrote a little and then put it aside. Even though I didn't take charge of much work, I always felt I was so busy and that I didn't have time to write. And so, day after day, I put off the matter of writing articles. Later, I made up a writing schedule, but when the time came, I was still busy with other things in my duty, so I couldn't calm myself to write. I found various reasons and excuses. Sometimes I said I was poorly educated, or had low caliber, so I couldn't write well. Other times I said I was busy and had no time, so I would do it later. Sometimes, I even felt like writing articles wasn't particularly important, and what mattered most was handling my daily work, because if I delayed it, I would be pruned and dealt with, or dismissed if it was serious. No one got on my case for not writing experience testimonials. When I thought about it like this, I took writing articles even less seriously, and didn't regard it as an important part of my duty. In this way, I was trapped in this stubborn and rebellious state, and was very passive in the matter of writing experience testimonials.

One day, I read a passage of God's words, and my view changed a little. God's words say: **"Now do you truly know why you believe in Me? Do you truly know the purpose and significance of My work? Do you truly know your duty? Do you truly know My testimony? If you merely believe in Me, yet there is no sign of My glory or testimony in you, then**

I have long ago cast you out. As for those who know it all, they are even more thorns in My eye, and in My house, they are nothing more than obstacles in My way, they are tares to be completely winnowed out in My work, they have no use, they are worthless, and I have long abhorred them. Often does My wrath befall all who are bereft of testimony, and never does My rod stray from them. I have long since turned them over to the hands of the evil one; they are bereft of My blessings. When the day comes, their chastisement will be more grievous even than that of foolish women. Today, I do only the work that is My duty to do; I will bind all the wheat into bundles, together along with those tares. This is My work today. Those tares shall all be winnowed out in the time of My winnowing, then the grains of wheat shall be gathered into the storehouse, and those tares that have been winnowed out shall be placed in the fire to be burned to dust. My work now is merely to bind all men into bundles; that is, to utterly conquer them. Then shall I begin winnowing to reveal the end of all men. And so you ought to know how you should satisfy Me now, and how you ought to set upon the right track in your faith in Me. What I desire is your loyalty and obedience now, your love and testimony now. Even if you do not know at this moment what testimony is or what love is, you should bring to Me your all, and turn over to Me the only treasures you have: your loyalty and obedience. You should know that the testimony to My defeat of Satan lies within the loyalty and obedience of man, as does the testimony to My complete conquest of man. The duty of your faith in Me is to bear witness to Me, to be loyal to Me and none other, and to be obedient to the end” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?). The passage clearly stated that believers in God should testify to God and that this is a person’s duty. When believers in God

can't testify, they become objects of God's hatred. I felt God's wrath when I read these lines of God's word, **"If you merely believe in Me, yet there is no sign of My glory or testimony in you, then I have long ago cast you out. As for those who know it all, they are even more thorns in My eye, and in My house, they are nothing more than obstacles in My way, they are tares to be completely winnowed out in My work,"** and **"Often does My wrath befall all who are bereft of testimony, and never does My rod stray from them. I have long since turned them over to the hands of the evil one; they are bereft of My blessings. When the day comes, their chastisement will be more grievous even than that of foolish women."**

After believing in God for so many years, after reading so much of God's word, hearing countless sermons and fellowship, experiencing pruning, dealing, setbacks, and failures, and experiencing the enlightenment, guidance, and discipline of the Holy Spirit, I still couldn't testify to God. I had some experience and knowledge, but I didn't want to work on writing. I spent all day handling external things, but didn't focus on seeking the truth to resolve my corrupt dispositions, and didn't seek to make progress in the truth. From my usual experience, I gained a little knowledge and light, but I didn't contemplate and gain clarity so that I could gain genuine understanding, and over time, I lost what I gained, and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit fell into neglect. I thought back to when I practiced watering newcomers before. I couldn't even fellowship well on the truth of testifying to God's work. The things I shared were relatively superficial, and I couldn't grasp key points. Later, when I preached the gospel, I also couldn't grasp the key points to analyze religious notions or the fallacies of antichrists clearly or convincingly. In every aspect of the truth, I only half-understood, and couldn't fellowship clearly. During fellowship on problems of life entry at gatherings, most of the time I only persuaded people using

superficial cliches, or I offered some empty theories and shallow understandings. I couldn't resolve problems at the root, and my testimony of God was ineffective. My understanding of any aspect of the truth was just doctrines, without the truth realities. I saw that I had believed in God for many years but couldn't testify to God. I only put in a little effort and do some work, but I hadn't actually accepted the judgment and chastisement of God's words, nor did I have any testimony of understanding the truth and changing my life disposition. I thought of how God said such people are **"thorns in His eye," "obstacles,"** and **"tares to be completely winnowed out."** God's wrath for such people never fades. These thoughts left me feeling miserable. I had believed in God for years and learned nothing. I felt like I was useless and an utter embarrassment. God especially hates such people, doesn't tolerate them, and becomes furious with them. Although such people perform their duties, because they don't pursue the truth, they can't receive the work of the Holy Spirit, and in the end, they have no testimony of dispositional change, and can't be saved by God. Seeing God's attitude toward such people, my notions were completely refuted. I used to think that if I did the work entrusted to me by the church, did no evil, made no big mistakes in my duty, committed no serious transgressions, and if I wasn't dismissed, it was as if I were in a safe, and I had a hope of salvation. Now I saw this was incompatible with God's requirements. It was just my own notions and wishful thinking. Believing in God is not merely working hard in your duty, abiding by some rules, and not committing any obvious evil. If you believe in God for many years and still have no testimony, you will ultimately be cast out. I thought of God's words: **"If a day comes when you are unable to testify to all that you have seen today, then you will have lost the function of created beings, and there will be no meaning whatsoever to your existence. You will be unworthy of being**

human. It could even be said that you will not be human! I have done immeasurable work on you, but because you are currently learning nothing, aware of nothing, and ineffective in your labors, when it is time for Me to expand My work, you will just stare blankly, tongue-tied and utterly useless. Will that not make you a sinner for all time? When that time comes, will you not feel the deepest regret?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Is Your Understanding of God?). God's words made me feel ashamed, and at the same time quite anxious. I felt like I couldn't go on like that and I had to practice writing articles to testify to God.

When I actually got down to writing, there were still some difficulties and blocks. At first, I couldn't straighten out my experience, and didn't know where to start, plus there was other work that was more urgent, so I worked on other things. After that, I still gave myself excuses. I thought others could write a whole testimony article in half a day, but I couldn't without a quiet environment and sufficient time, and that it seemed my caliber was insufficient to write articles, so I stopped writing again. I began wondering about this after that. Why was I so passive about writing testimony articles? Why did I agree to write, but I didn't do anything? One day, I saw a passage of God's words and gained some understanding of myself. God says: **"How can you know and discern a satanic disposition? Based on the things that Satan likes doing, as well as the methods and tricks by which it does things, one can see that it never likes positive things, that it likes evil, and that it always thinks itself competent and capable of controlling everything. This is Satan's arrogant nature. That's why Satan unscrupulously denies, resists, and opposes God. Satan is the representative and source of all negative things and all evil things. If you can see this clearly, then you have discernment of satanic dispositions. It is not a simple matter for people**

to accept the truth and practice the truth, because they all have satanic dispositions, and they all are constrained and bound by their satanic dispositions. For example, some people recognize that it is good to be an honest person, and they feel envious and jealous when they see others being honest, telling the truth, and speaking in a simple and openhearted manner, yet if you ask them to be honest people themselves, they find it difficult. They are unwaveringly incapable of speaking honest words and of doing honest things. Isn't this a satanic disposition? They say nice-sounding things, but they don't practice them. This is being sick of the truth. Those who are sick of the truth have a hard time accepting the truth and have no way to enter into the truth realities. The most obvious state of people who are sick of the truth is that they are not interested in the truth and positive things, they are even averse to them and loathe them, and they especially like to follow trends. They do not accept in their hearts the things that God loves and what God requires people to do. Instead, they are dismissive and indifferent toward them, and some people even often despise the standards and principles that God requires of man. They are averse to positive things, and they always feel resistant, opposed, and full of contempt toward them in their hearts. This is the primary manifestation of being sick of the truth. In church life, reading God's word, praying, fellowshiping on the truth, performing duties, and resolving problems with the truth are all positive things. They are pleasing to God, but some people are averse to these positive things, don't care for them, and are indifferent to them. The most hateful part is that they adopt a contemptuous attitude toward positive people, such as honest people, those who pursue the truth, those who perform their duties faithfully, and those who safeguard the work of God's house.

They always try to attack and exclude these people. If they discover that they have shortcomings or revelations of corruption, they seize upon this, making a big fuss about it, and constantly belittle them for it. What kind of disposition is this? Why do they hate positive people so much? Why are they so fond of and accommodating toward wicked people, nonbelievers, and antichrists, and why do they often fool around with such people? Where negative and evil things are concerned, they feel excitement and elation, but when it comes to positive things, resistance begins to appear in their attitude; in particular, when they hear people fellowshiping the truth or solving problems using the truth, they feel bored and dissatisfied in their hearts, and they vent their grievances. Isn't this disposition being sick of the truth? Isn't this the revelation of a corrupt disposition? There are many people who believe in God who like to do work for Him and run around enthusiastically for Him, and when it comes to putting their gifts and strengths to use, indulging their preferences and showing off, they have boundless energy. But if you ask them to practice the truth and act according to the truth principles, it takes the wind from their sails, and they lose their enthusiasm. If they are not allowed to show off, they grow listless and despondent. Why is it that they have energy for showing off? And why is it that they have no energy for practicing the truth? What is the problem here? People all like to distinguish themselves; they all covet empty glory. Everyone has inexhaustible energy when it comes to believing in God for the sake of gaining blessings and rewards, so why do they grow listless, why are they despondent when it comes to practicing the truth and forsaking the flesh? Why does this happen? It proves that people's hearts are adulterated. They believe in God entirely for the sake of gaining

blessings—to put it plainly, they do so in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. Without blessings or benefits to pursue, people grow listless and despondent, and have no enthusiasm. This is all caused by a corrupt disposition that is sick of the truth. When controlled by this disposition, people are unwilling to choose the path of pursuing the truth, they go their own way, and they choose the incorrect path—they know full well that it is wrong to pursue prestige, profit, and status and yet still cannot bear to do without these things or to put them aside, and they still pursue them, walking the path of Satan. In this case, they are not following God, but following Satan. Everything they do is in service of Satan, and they are servants of Satan” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Previously, I didn’t work hard on writing articles. I only felt a little temporary guilt over it and didn’t care that much about it. I didn’t think it was a big problem. Only through the revelation of God’s word did I see that this was being sick of the truth, a kind of satanic disposition. Writing articles requires experience and knowledge, and it also takes time to think. We must calm ourselves, contemplate God’s word, seek the truth, and reflect on ourselves. This is why, when asked to seek the truth, contemplate God’s word, and write articles, I refused and resisted in my heart. God has fellowshiped much on how to testify to Him, and all my brothers and sisters practice writing experience testimonials, but I was indifferent, and even made excuses to avoid it. I was so stubborn! I resisted and resented things that involve the truth, and was unwilling to work hard on them. In external things, for work not involved with the truth, I was especially enthusiastic and willing. This is because doing those things was a personal strength of mine; it came easily to me, and afterward the brothers and sisters could clearly see the fruits of my labor. I wasn’t going to be pruned or dealt with, or dismissed. I could maintain my reputation. That

sort of behavior on my part really was being fed up with the truth—it was a satanic disposition. In fact, the process of writing an article is a process of seeking truth. Seeking truth to solve problems can best reveal people's attitude toward truth. I had believed in God for years, could forsake and expend to fulfill my duty, and I could speak a lot of words and doctrines, but I was not interested in the truth and did not yearn for it or treasure it, nor did I have genuine obedience to God. I still lived by my satanic disposition and was still hostile to God. Once I reflected on this, I realized that my problem was serious. After years of believing in God, there had been no real change in my attitude toward God and the truth. I still belonged to Satan, was sick of the truth, resisted God, and my disposition had not changed at all. If this continued, no matter how long I believed or how much effort I put in, I would never understand the truth or resolve my corrupt dispositions. Even if I believed to the end, I would never be saved. At this moment, I felt a little afraid, so I prayed to God to repent: “God, I do not love the truth, I’m sick of it. I only enjoyed expending effort and labor in my duty. Now I see how pathetic I am in my belief. I don’t want to continue this way. I wish to turn around toward You, and work hard to pursue the truth.”

Later, in response to my complaints of my being poorly educated and having poor caliber, a sister sent me a passage of God’s words which I found very beneficial. God says: **“Experiencing the judgment and chastisement of God’s words brings you gains and real experiences—so you should bear testimony to God. When bearing testimony for God, you should mainly talk about how God judges and chastises people, and what trials He uses to refine people and change their dispositions. You should also talk about how much corruption has been revealed in your experience, how much you have suffered, how many things you**

did to resist God, and how you were eventually conquered by God. Talk about how much real knowledge of God's work you have, and how you should bear witness for God and repay Him for His love. You should put substance into this kind of language, while putting it in a simple manner. Do not talk about empty theories. Speak more down-to-earth; speak from the heart. This is how you should experience things. Do not equip yourselves with profound-seeming, empty theories in an effort to show off; doing so makes you appear quite arrogant and senseless. You should speak more about real things from your actual experience, and speak more from the heart; this is most beneficial to others, and most appropriate for them to see. You used to be people who opposed God the most, who were least inclined to submit to Him, but now you have been conquered—never forget that. You should ponder and think about these matters more. Once people understand them clearly, they will know how to bear testimony, otherwise, they will be liable to commit shameful and senseless acts, which is not bearing testimony for God, but rather bringing shame upon God. Without genuine experiences and an understanding of the truth, it is not possible to bear testimony for God. People whose faith in God is muddled and confused will never be able to bear testimony for God” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses

of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). After reading God's words, I understood that genuine testimony of God is to testify to God's words and God's work, fellowship on your experience of judgment, chastisement, trials, and refinement of God's word, fellowship on the corruption you display, and share what knowledge you gained of yourself through what God's word reveals, and how you practiced and entered into it, so that others can see God's righteous disposition and know God's work and God's love. To testify to God it doesn't matter how capable

one is at speaking of advanced theories. All that matters is that you speak honestly and sincerely. Once I realized this, my heart felt a little brighter. The same is true of writing experience testimonials. Your educational level or writing style doesn't matter. The key is whether you can expend the effort to pursue the truth, whether you seek the truth to resolve your corruption and problems, whether you experience God's judgment and chastisement, analyze and know yourself based on God's word, clearly see the essence of problems, and genuinely repent and change. When you are equipped with these things, the articles you write will be good. This has nothing to do with your level of education. All you need to do is write of practical experience and knowledge in the language of daily life. You simply need to write what you experience and understand. If you write out your genuine understanding and feelings in your own words, whatever can benefit others, then you have a testimonial. In the past, I always thought I had low education and low caliber, and I used this as an excuse not to write articles, as if writing them required a high level of knowledge or caliber, but now I see that this view was wrong. I shouldn't have lived in this state. I should focus on pursuing the truth, practicing and experiencing God's words and writing articles about what I experienced and gained to testify to God. This was my duty.

At a gathering, I saw a passage of God's words, which helped me bear a burden in pursuing the truth and writing testimonial articles. God's words say: **"What is the cause of the emergence of the category of people who are leaders and workers? How did they emerge? On a grand scale, they are required for God's work; on a smaller scale, they are required for the work of the church, they are required by God's chosen people. ... The difference between leaders and workers and the rest of God's chosen people is only a special characteristic in the duties they perform.**

This special characteristic shows principally in their leadership roles. For example, no matter how many people a church has, the leader is the head. So what role does this leader play among the members? They lead all of the chosen ones in the church. So what effect do they have throughout the whole church? If this leader takes the wrong path, God's chosen people in the church will follow the leader down the wrong path, which will have a huge impact on all of them. Take Paul for example. He led many of the churches he founded and God's chosen people. When Paul went astray, the churches and God's chosen people he led also went astray. So, when leaders go astray, they are not the only ones who are impacted, but the churches and God's chosen people they lead are impacted as well. If a leader is a right person, one who is walking the right path and pursues and practices truth, then the people they lead will eat and drink God's words properly and pursue truth properly, and, at the same time, the leader's life experience and progress will be visible to others, and will impact others. So, what is the correct path that a leader should walk? It is being able to lead others to an understanding of the truth and an entry into the truth, and to lead others before God. What is an incorrect path? It is to pursue status, fame, and profit, to frequently show off oneself and to bear witness to oneself, never bearing witness to God. What effect does this have on God's chosen ones? (It brings them before oneself.) They will stray far from God and come under this leader's control. If you lead people to come before you, then you are leading them to come before corrupt mankind, and you are leading them to come before Satan, not God. Only leading people to come before truth is leading them to come before God. Leaders and workers, no matter whether they walk the right path or the wrong one, have a direct influence on God's chosen

people” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item One: They Try to Win People Over). After reading God’s words, I was clearer about my responsibilities and duties. At the same time, I felt a great responsibility on my shoulders. God tells us that what path leaders and workers take and what they seek not only affects themselves, but also the brothers and sisters they lead. When leaders and workers pursue the truth and are the right people, then they will continually make progress in the truth, in daily life they can reflect on what mistaken views they have or what corrupt dispositions they live by, understand the essence of problems based on God’s words, and then find out which principles to enter. When leaders and workers take the right path, they will bear a burden for the life entry of their brothers and sisters and focus on seeking truth to solve problems, so the people they lead will also enter in this direction. If leaders and workers are neglectful, do not pursue the truth, spend all their time working to gain fame and status, are not interested in the pursuit of truth, and can’t fellowship on the truth to resolve problems, and if they just busy themselves with external matters in their duty, or they speak words and doctrines to exalt and distinguish themselves, and they can’t fellowship on the truth to testify to God, then they are walking the path of resisting God, and the direction they are leading people is wrong. Such people unconsciously go their own way and lead others down the path of doing service, which is Paul’s path of resisting God. This goes against God’s intention to work and save people. The church gave me the opportunity to practice being a leader not so that I could do external work, not so that I could do service and labor, and not so that I could pursue reputation and status. I should play the role of a leader, and lead the brothers and sisters in eating and drinking God’s words, seeking the truth to resolve problems in their duty, and gradually being able to understand the truth and enter into the realities of God’s word. This was my duty. So, I felt

that it was crucial to focus on pursuing the truth and resolving my corrupt dispositions. At this point, I had a very shallow understanding of the truth, and I possessed no truth realities, so I could only learn as I experienced it. As long as my heart and path were correct, I would receive God's guidance.

In the following period, I reflected on what problems I solved by truly seeking the truth over my years of belief in God and which corrupt dispositions I had resolved. In doing this, I found that I was confused and only half-understood many questions. I didn't genuinely understand the truth and see the essence of problems, or find principles of practice, nor did I ever effectively resolve problems. After that, I tried to write about the experiences of which I had a relatively good understanding, and as I wrote, I contemplated. I contemplated whenever I had time. When I finally finished writing the article, I felt very fulfilled, secure, and at ease. In the process of writing the article, through seeking the truth, I naturally began to see my state and the essence of my problems more clearly, my knowledge of the truth became more practical and concrete, and my path of practice became clearer. I saw that writing testimony articles is extremely helpful in grasping my own state and seeking the truth to solve problems. This was a path for life entry, and also the best way to seek and understand the truth.

Later, I heard that many, including even leaders and workers, didn't focus on writing articles, nor did they expend any effort in this aspect. Some always said that they were busy with work and had no time to write articles. I thought, "Wasn't this my exact state? I held that mistaken point of view as well, and I made excuses not to write. If I can take my own process of how I resolved my state and how I changed my point of view and write an article about it, won't that resolve some of my brothers' and sisters' problems?" Realizing this, I felt I now had a burden to bear, and decided to write an article about it. Although my understanding was very shallow and

one-sided, I knew writing this article was my duty, so I had to practice writing about as much as I understood. Normally, when I met or chatted with my brothers and sisters, I would fellowship with them on this topic, and I thought about this topic when I had free time. During my morning devotional, I ate and drank of God's word on the subject. After a while, I could see the issue a bit more clearly, and when I wrote about it, it was much easier. After I made the outline, I expressed each layer of meaning according to my own understanding, and wrote out my thoughts and experiences in my own words. It didn't feel all that difficult anymore, and as I contemplated things while I wrote, I could see the problem as well as aspects of the truth involved more clearly. I genuinely felt that the more we try to pursue the truth and the more we write articles, and use the writing of articles as a means to pursue the truth and solve problems, the more we receive God's enlightenment and guidance and the more blessed we are. I thought of God's word: **"The more mindful you are of God's will, the greater the burden you bear, and the greater the burden you bear, the richer your experience will be. When you are mindful of God's will, God will lay a burden upon you, and then enlighten you about the tasks which He has entrusted to you. When God gives you this burden, you will pay attention to all the related truths while eating and drinking of God's words. If you have a burden related to the state of your brothers' and sisters' lives, then this is a burden that has been entrusted to you by God, and you will always carry this burden with you in your daily prayers. What God does has been laden onto you, and you are willing to do that which God wants to do; this is what it means to take on God's burden as your own. At this point, in your eating and drinking of God's words, you will focus on these types of issues, and you will wonder, How am I going to solve these problems? How can I enable my**

brothers and sisters to achieve release and find spiritual enjoyment? You will also focus on solving these problems while fellowshiping, and when eating and drinking of God's words, you will focus on eating and drinking of words that relate to these issues. You will also carry a burden while eating and drinking of His words. Once you have understood God's requirements, you will have a clearer idea about which path to take. This is the enlightenment and illumination of the Holy Spirit brought by your burden, and this is also God's guidance which has been bestowed upon you. Why do I say this? If you have no burden, then you will not be attentive while eating and drinking of God's words; when you eat and drink of God's words while carrying a burden, you can grasp their essence, find your way, and be mindful of God's will. Therefore, in your prayers, you should wish for God to place more burdens upon you and entrust you with even greater tasks, so that ahead of you, you may have more of a path on which to practice; so that your eating and drinking of God's words has a greater effect; so that you grow able to grasp the essence of His words; and so that you become more capable of being moved by the Holy Spirit" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Be Mindful of God's Will in Order to Attain Perfection). God's word made me realize that when we bear the burdens of our own life entry and problems in the church, we are able to expend more effort in seeking the truth to resolve problems, conscientiously eat, drink and practice God's word. Then we can enter into the truth reality faster. During this process, as we bear burdens, yearn, and seek, we can obtain God's enlightenment and guidance, gradually deepen our understanding of the truth, see into matters and people more clearly and thoroughly, and gain a more concrete and practical grasp on the truth. If we don't work hard to pursue the truth or practice writing articles, even if we gain some light

regarding God's word, it is only a shallow, perceptual understanding that will always feel vague, like shapes in the fog, and it shows we have no real knowledge. Only by writing down our knowledge and experience, thoroughly contemplating and understanding issues based on God's word, and raising our perceptual knowledge to be relatively precise, realistic, and concrete does our understanding finally bear fruit. Writing articles is a process of gaining clarity in matters, of understanding the truth and resolving problems. The more we write, the more we gain.

Now, I don't resist writing articles. It is something I enjoy, because in the process of writing, I see my own corrupt dispositions more clearly, and my viewpoints and ideology also change as I come to understand God's word. This is a real benefit, and something which is most valuable and meaningful. Before, I always felt that writing articles was laborious and especially difficult, and I would rather do external work than try to write articles about my experiences. I was very rebellious and stubborn. I even felt that writing articles would delay my work, but this view was actually quite mistaken and absurd. Writing articles doesn't delay work at all. Instead, it prompts you to seek the truth to solve problems and makes you more capable of effectiveness in your duty. Now, whenever I have time, I try to calm myself and consider my state. I am also willing to put effort into contemplating problems I can't see clearly or solve. I have gradually begun to bear a burden for my life entry. I also feel I have many states that must be resolved by seeking the truth, and gradually, I have developed a yearning for God's word. This is all due to God's grace. Thank God!

47. Lying Only Brings Pain

By Kenneth, South Korea

One day in May 2021, we were getting ready to film a video of Brother Luka singing a solo, and I was working on stage lighting. At first I was very careful, and there weren't any problems with the first few shots, so I gradually relaxed a bit. We were almost done filming when the director said he wanted to try one shot again in a couple different ways. I wasn't paying attention, so when we started rolling I was still watching another monitor, and didn't notice until Luka had walked out of the lit area. I hurried to adjust the light, but wasn't fast enough, causing Luka's head to move out of the light and then back in again. The shot was unusable. Normally when we have a problem on stage, we are supposed to ask the director to do another take right away, but I just held the walkie-talkie, afraid to speak. The words caught in my throat and I felt really conflicted. I thought about how it wasn't just the director that was there, but lots of other brothers and sisters as well. If I told them I'd made such a rudimentary mistake, what would everyone think of me? Would they say I'd been negligent in my duty? That would be so embarrassing! But I wouldn't be doing my duty if I didn't say anything. It would have a direct impact on the quality of the video if the footage was used in editing. As I was struggling with whether or not to speak up, I heard the director say, "We're good on this one, let's do the next one." I saw that the brother who was doing the filming had already switched out his stand and was waiting, so I started justifying it to myself, thinking, "The filming is all done, if I say something now, everyone will have to switch their equipment back and will be a big hassle. I should just not say anything, it was just the first of the two shots anyway, and might not even be used. Besides, if people don't look closely

they probably won't even see it." I kept turning it over in my mind, but eventually decided to keep quiet. After filming I felt plagued with guilt, thinking: "Wasn't I being knowingly deceptive? I can deceive people, but can I deceive God?" So I found the director and told him about my mistake. He said, "We're done shooting and everyone's packed up. What good is it telling me now? Why didn't you tell me then? If you did, it wouldn't have taken long to film it again." Seeing the disappointment on the director's face made me feel even worse and I wanted to slap myself. Why was it so hard for me to admit I was wrong in front of everyone? Why did it take so much effort to just be honest? In pain, I came to God and prayed: "God, I made a mistake while performing my duty, and didn't have the courage to admit it in front of everyone because I was afraid they'd criticize me and look down on me. Now, I'm consumed by guilt. Please guide me to know myself."

After that, I saw that God's word says: **"Say you were to choose between two roads. One is the road of being an honest person, of telling the truth and saying what is in your heart, of sharing your heart with others, or of admitting to your mistakes and telling the facts as they are, showing others your corrupt ugliness and bringing shame onto your person. The other is the road of giving your life in martyrdom for God and entering the kingdom of heaven when you die. Which do you choose? Some may say, 'I choose to give up my life for God. I am willing to die for Him; after death I'll have my reward, and enter the kingdom of heaven.' Laying down one's life for God can be accomplished in a single, vigorous push, by those with resolve. But can practicing the truth and being an honest person be accomplished in such a push? It cannot, even in two pushes. If you have the will when doing something, you can do it well in a single push; but a single**

instance of telling the truth without a lie does not make you an honest person once and for all. Being an honest person involves changing your disposition, and this requires ten or twenty years of experience. You must cast off your deceitful disposition of lies and duplicity before you can meet the basic standard of being an honest person. Is this not difficult for everyone? It is an enormous challenge. God now wants to perfect and gain a group of people, and all who pursue the truth must accept judgment and chastisement, trials and refinement, the purpose of which is to resolve their deceitful dispositions and make them into honest people, people who submit to God. This is not something that can be achieved in a single push; it calls for true faith, and one must suffer many trials and much refinement before they can achieve it. If God asked you now to be an honest person and speak the truth, something that involves the facts, and your future and your fate, the consequences of which might not be to your advantage, with others no longer thinking highly of you, and feeling yourself that your reputation was destroyed—in such circumstances, could you be frank, and speak the truth? Could you still be honest? This is the hardest thing to do, much harder than giving up your life. You might say, ‘Having me tell the truth won’t do. I’d rather die for God than tell the truth. I don’t want to be an honest person at all. I’d rather die than have everyone look down on me and think I am an ordinary person.’ What does this show people cherish most? What people cherish most is their status and reputation—things that are controlled by their satanic dispositions. Life is secondary. If the situation forced them to, they would summon the strength to give their life, but status and reputation are not easy to give up. For people who believe in God, giving their life is not of the utmost importance; God requires people to accept the truth, and truly

be honest people who say whatever is in their hearts, opening up and laying themselves bare to everyone. Is this easy to do? (No, it isn't.) God does not, in fact, ask you to give up your life. Was your life not given to you by God? What use would your life be to God? God does not want it. He wants you to speak honestly, to say who you are and what you think in your heart. Can you say these things? Here, the task becomes difficult, and you may say, 'Have me work hard, and I'd have the strength to do it. Have me sacrifice all of my property, and I could do it. I could easily abandon my parents and children, my marriage and career. But saying what is in my heart, speaking honestly—that's the one thing I cannot do.' What is the reason you cannot do it? It is that once you do, anyone who knows you or is familiar with you will see you differently. They will no longer look up to you. You will have lost face and been utterly humiliated, and your integrity and dignity will be no more. Your lofty status and prestige in the hearts of others will be no more. This is why in such circumstances, no matter what, you will not speak the truth. When people encounter this, there is a battle in their hearts, and when that battle is over, some ultimately break through their difficulties while others do not, and remain controlled by their corrupt satanic dispositions and their own status, reputation, and so-called dignity. This is a difficulty, is it not? Merely speaking honestly and telling the truth is not some great feat, yet so many brave heroes, so many people who have sworn to dedicate and spend their lives for God, and so many who have said grandiose things to God find it impossible to do" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation). God's words described my true state. I put too much importance on face and status. I couldn't say a single word admitting my mistake, afraid of looking bad in front of everyone. I was

afraid everyone would say I wasn't doing my job if I could make such a simple mistake. How embarrassing. To protect my image and status, I covered up my mistake, thinking that if I didn't say anything, no one would know and they wouldn't criticize me for it. Then my pride and image would remain intact. Even though I felt guilty and ill at ease, I still found an excuse to comfort myself: "It's just one take, they might not even use it." Wasn't I lying to myself as well as others? At this thought I felt great remorse and regret for deceiving my brothers and sisters just to save face and maintain status. I prayed to God, "Oh God, I didn't own up to my mistake because I wanted to save face and maintain status. I know that's at odds with Your will, but I felt like I was led astray by the devil and couldn't escape my corrupt disposition. God, please guide me so I can be free of the constraints and bonds of my corrupt disposition."

Then I read a couple passages from God's word that gave me some ways of practice. God says: **"Only honest people can have a share in the kingdom of heaven. If you do not try to be an honest person, and if you don't experience and practice in the direction of pursuing the truth, if you don't expose your own ugliness, and if you don't lay yourself bare, then you will never be able to receive the Holy Spirit's work and gain God's approval. No matter what you do or what duty you perform, you must have an honest attitude. Without an honest attitude, you cannot perform your duty well. If you always perform your duty in a careless and perfunctory way, and you fail to do something well, then you should reflect on yourself, understand yourself, and open up to analyze yourself. Then you should seek the truth principles and strive to do better next time, instead of being careless and perfunctory. If you do not try and satisfy God with a heart that is honest, and always look to satisfy your own flesh, or your own pride, then will you be able to do a**

good job? Will you be able to perform your duty well? Certainly not”

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). **“If, having made a mistake, you can treat it**

correctly, and can allow everyone else to talk about it, permitting their commentary and discernment about it, and you can open up about it and analyze it, what will everyone’s opinion of you be? They will say you are an honest person, for your heart is open to God. Through your actions and behavior, they will be able to see your heart. But if you try to disguise yourself and deceive everyone, people will think little of you, and say you are a fool and an unwise person. If you do not try to put on a pretense or justify yourself, if you can admit your mistakes, everyone will say you are honest and wise. And what makes you wise? Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone has faults and flaws. And actually, everyone has the same corrupt disposition. Do not think yourself more noble, perfect, and kind than others; that is being utterly unreasonable. Once people’s corrupt dispositions and the essence and true face of their corruption are clear to you, you will not try to cover up your own mistakes, nor will you hold other people’s mistakes against them—you will be able to face both correctly. Only then will you become insightful and not do foolish things, which will make you wise” (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One’s Conduct). I learned from God’s word that everyone makes mistakes in the course of their duty. It’s normal. We shouldn’t cover these things up, we have to call a spade a spade, take the initiative to own up to our mistakes, and be open with others about our corruption and shortcomings. We shouldn’t be concerned about saving face and maintaining status, but instead be honest people as God demands. This is the only way to live a life of character and dignity, and obtain God’s approval and blessings. But I cared too much

about what other people thought of me while doing my duty, always wanting to maintain my status and image. Because of this, I always wanted to cover up any mistakes I made and was afraid of others finding out. I didn't have the courage to come clean even when I felt guilty. I didn't give any thought whatsoever to the damage this could do to the work of the church. I wasn't protecting the church's work while carrying out my duties, and I wasn't remotely honest. How could I do my duty properly if I carried on like this? I felt so guilty at this realization and wanted to correct the state in which I performed my duties.

After that, when I occasionally made a mistake in filming and felt conflicted about whether or not to say something, I was aware that I was just trying to protect my status and image in the eyes of others again. I'd pray to God and ask Him to guide me to practice the truth and be an honest person, so I could admit my mistake in front of everyone. When I did that, the brothers and sisters didn't blame me and could handle my mistake appropriately. I felt much more grounded, and I felt the peace and joy that comes from practicing the truth.

One day, we were working on another solo video. Before we started shooting, the director asked if the lights were ready. I thought I'd checked them already, so I said confidently, "Everything's fine, we're good to go!" But after one shot, I suddenly realized I'd forgotten to turn a couple lights on. I panicked. I wanted to say something but hesitated, thinking, "I've assured everyone confidently everything was ready before shooting, so if I admit to making a mistake now, what will they think of me? Will they lose confidence in me? Forgetting to turn the lights on is such a rookie mistake. How could I show my face again if I admitted it? Would the brothers and sisters think I'm useless, having messed up such a simple task?" Conflicting emotions wrestled within me, and I felt like I was lying on a bed of nails. I

wanted to own up to my mistake, but we'd already done several shots. If I said there was a lighting problem now, would everyone criticize me for waiting until now to say something rather than speaking up right away? After racking my brains, I figured out a solution: I could wait until we were done shooting and then go talk alone to the brother editing the video and ask him to adjust the lighting. That way, I wouldn't have to admit my mistake in front of everyone. This solution wouldn't impact the video quality and would let me save face and maintain my status at the same time. So after we finished filming, I went to the brother doing the editing and downplayed it, saying, "I had a problem with the lighting in the first shot, but I did a careful comparison to others and the difference isn't that obvious. It's just a small difference in brightness. It'd be great if you could help adjust it." He took me at my word and said he'd help adjust it. I felt guilty as soon as the words left my mouth because whether the lights were on actually did make a big difference, but I'd said the difference was slight. Wasn't I just looking my brother in the eye and lying? It ended up taking him over three hours to get the lighting right on the shot. First thing the next morning, the director messaged me asking, "Didn't you notice there was such a big problem with the lighting yesterday?" I hadn't expected the director to find out so quickly, and for a moment I didn't know what to say, so I found some excuses to explain myself. He said, "This has happened before, you found a mistake on the spot but didn't say anything. This is holding up our work. You really need to reflect on what you've done." I felt so guilty when he said that. I hated that I'd been controlled and bound by my corrupt disposition and had failed to practice the truth again. I knelt and prayed, "God, I place too much importance on face and status. This time, not only did I not speak up about my mistake, but I tried my best to cover it up. I'm so devious! God, I want to repent. Please guide me and save me."

Then I read this passage from God's word: **"The humanity of antichrists is dishonest, which means they are not truthful in the least. Everything they say and do is adulterated and contains their own intentions and goals, and hidden in it all are their unsaid and unspeakable tricks and conspiracies. So the words and actions of antichrists are too contaminated and too full of falsity. No matter how much they speak, it's impossible to know which of their words are true, which are false, which are right, and which are wrong. Because they are dishonest, their minds are extremely complicated, full of treacherous schemes and rife with tricks. None of what they say is straightforward. They do not say one is one, two is two, yes is yes, and no is no. Instead, in all matters, they beat around the bush and think things through several times in their minds, working out the consequences, weighing the merits and drawbacks from every angle. Then, they manipulate things with their language such that everything they say sounds quite unwieldy. Honest people never understand what they say and are easily deceived and tricked by them, and whoever speaks and communicates with such people finds the experience tiring and laborious. They never say one is one and two is two, they never say what they are thinking, and they never describe things as they are. Everything they say is unfathomable, and the goals and intentions of their actions are very complicated. If their cover is blown—if other people see through them, and catch on to them—they quickly concoct another lie to get around it. This kind of person often lies, and after lying, they have to tell more lies to sustain the lie. They deceive others to hide their intentions, and fabricate all kinds of pretexts and excuses in aid of their lies, so that it is very difficult for people to tell what's true and what's not, and people don't know when they are being**

truthful, much less when they're telling a lie. When they lie, they do not blush or flinch, just as if they were telling the truth. Does this not mean lying has become their nature? For example, sometimes antichrists seem on the surface to be good to others, to be considerate of them, and to be warm-hearted in their speech, which is pleasing and moving to hear. Yet even when they speak like this, no one can tell whether they are being sincere, and it always requires waiting until things happen a few days later to reveal whether they were being sincere. Antichrists always speak with certain intentions, and no one can work out what it is, exactly, that they are after. Such people are habitual liars who give no thought to the consequences of any of their lies. As long as their lie benefits them and is able to deceive others, as long as it can achieve their goals, they don't care what the consequences are. As soon as they are exposed, they will continue to conceal, to lie, to trick. The principle and method by which these people interact with others is tricking people with lies. They are two-faced and speak to suit their audience; they perform whatever role the situation demands. They are smooth and slick, their mouths are filled with lies, and they are untrustworthy. Whoever is in contact with them for a while grows deceived or disturbed and cannot receive provision, help, or edification. No matter if the words from such people's mouths are nasty or nice, or reasonable or absurd, or in accord or disaccord with humanity, or coarse or civilized, they are essentially all falsehoods, untruths, lies'' (The Word, Vol. 4.

Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Four: Summarizing the Character of Antichrists and the Essence of Their Disposition (Part One)). God's word exposes the antichrists' devious and crafty nature. They are dishonest in their words and actions. You will not hear a single word of truth from them. To keep themselves from being exposed, they keep on shamelessly lying to hide their despicable motives.

Antichrists are incredibly evil. I felt called out by God's words. I caused a mistake because I was careless with checking during filming, and didn't admit it because I was afraid of being looked down on by my brothers and sisters. I racked my brains to find a way to cover it up. I talked privately to the editing brother to get him to fix the problem and created an illusion, deliberately lying to him that the issue wasn't obvious, so he'd think it was no big deal. I was way too devious. Wasn't my disposition just as evil as an antichrist's? God likes honest people, but I am so devious. How could God not despise and feel disgusted by this? I remembered the Lord Jesus saying: **"Let your communication be, Yes, yes; No, no: for whatever is more than these comes of evil"** (Matthew 5:37). **"You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stayed not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it"** (John 8:44). God says that lies come from the evil one, from the devil, and that those who always lie are devils. With my constant lying, and then more lies to cover up the first ones, wasn't I just like Satan? What I was saying had a demonic element, it was deceptive, and it was disruptive to the work of the church. That mistake I made in filming could have been resolved with an honest admission, and avoided a lot of unnecessary trouble. But to save face and maintain status, after mulling it over in my mind I couldn't say an honest word. I lied over and over again to cover it up, deceiving my brothers and sisters, and ended up making the editing brother spend over three hours fixing my mistakes. I had no consideration for other people's work or what consequences there may be if the faulty shots were used in the final video. It was very selfish and despicable of me. I saw that I had given rein to my corrupt disposition and that everything I did was hurting myself and others. It made people sick, and disgusted God.

I was filled with regret and self-reproach. I prayed to God that I wanted to stop caring about saving face and maintaining status, and be a simple, open and honest person.

I saw that God's word says: **"You must seek the truth to resolve any problem that arises, no matter what it is, and by no means disguise yourself or put on a false face for others. Your shortcomings, your deficiencies, your faults, your corrupt dispositions—be completely open about them all, and fellowship about them all. Do not keep them inside. Learning how to open yourself up is the first step toward life entry, and it is the first hurdle, which is the most difficult to overcome. Once you have overcome it, entering the truth is easy. What does taking this step signify? It means that you are opening your heart and showing everything you have, good or bad, positive or negative; baring yourself for others and for God to see; hiding nothing from God, concealing nothing, disguising nothing, free of deceit and trickery, and being likewise open and honest with other people. In this way, you live in the light, and not only will God scrutinize you, but other people will also be able to see that you act with principle and a degree of transparency. You do not need to use any methods to protect your reputation, image, and status, nor do you need to cover up or disguise your mistakes. You do not need to engage in these useless efforts. If you can let these things go, you will be very relaxed, you will live without shackles or pain, and you will live entirely in the light"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). In God's words, I found the paths to practice the truth: I need to learn to open up, open my heart to God, and not be disingenuous, devious or deceitful to protect my image. I need to be open with my brothers and sisters about my corruption, shortcomings and mistakes, and my ulterior motives. That's the most crucial step in entering into the truth.

Achieving that is the only way to gradually be free from the bondage and control of one's corrupt disposition and live in true human likeness. I can't keep acting from a place of trying to save face and maintain status. I need to accept God's scrutiny and the supervision of my brothers and sisters. So, I came clean to everyone about my mistakes and the corruption that had revealed itself in the process. I also did some things to punish myself, to make sure I wouldn't forget. This experience made me aware of my devious disposition and I swore I'd change.

One day during filming, I took my eyes away for a moment to look at a detail on another camera screen, and the singer walked out of the lit area. By the time I realized, he'd already sung quite a few lines. We had over 10 seconds of unusable footage because of the lighting problem. I thought, "How could I make the same mistake again? I've been messing up so much lately. What would people think if I admitted it? Would they say I wasn't taking my duty seriously?" Just as I was debating saying something, I suddenly realized I was trying to save face and maintain my status again. I remembered the damage I had caused to the church's work in the past because I wanted to protect myself and didn't tell the truth. I thought also of how disgraceful my efforts to hide my mistakes had been, and all the pain and distress I felt from lying. I realized I couldn't deceive and trick others, that I had to forsake myself and practice the truth. So I stopped wavering, and told the director what had happened.

After that, I started consciously practicing being an honest person while performing my duties, proactively admitting my mistakes and not obsessing about status and face. I was able to consciously protect the work of the church. Even though I sometimes had to deal with being reprimanded and exhorted by my brothers and sisters after admitting to mistakes, as well as the loss of face that accompanied it, practicing the truth prevented my

mistakes from damaging the church's work. This made me feel particularly grounded and at peace. I truly experienced how painful it is to lie and deceive to protect my own status and reputation. Practicing the truth and being an honest person is the only way to be a person of character and dignity and live openly in the light. Thanks be to God!

48. Nineteen Years of Blood and Tears

By Wang Yufeng, China

I've been a believer in the Lord since I was a little girl, along with my parents. When I was in my 30s, my husband died from an illness, and I was left to raise two sons and a daughter on my own. Thanks to the Lord's grace, my children turned out to be successful in their careers and became very well-off, with happy families. Then in 1999, my whole family and I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days, and we began enthusiastically spreading and bearing witness to the kingdom gospel. However, an arrest out of the blue shattered our family's peaceful life.

One night in June 2002, I found out that the police had gone to my oldest son's workplace to arrest him, but he managed to sneak away in a moment the police weren't paying attention. They were looking for him everywhere. I was anxious and full of apprehension when I heard this news. Were they going to get him? If he really were arrested, they would definitely torture him and really wreak havoc on him. We'd been a happy family with all of our needs met. My children were all believers and were active in their duties—it had been so wonderful! But now the police were after my son, he'd lost his job and didn't dare go home. Our family was split up. I had no idea what we were going to do. I got more upset the more I thought about it, so I came before God in prayer, asking Him to watch over my son and to guide me to understand His will. I remembered something God said after praying: **“Do not be discouraged, do not be weak, and I will make things clear for you. The road to the kingdom is not so smooth; nothing is that simple! You want blessings to come to you easily, do you not? Today, everyone will have bitter trials to face. Without such trials, the loving heart you have for Me will not grow**

stronger and you will not have true love for Me. Even if these trials consist merely of minor circumstances, everyone must pass through them; it's just that the difficulty of the trials will vary from one person to another" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). From God's words, I knew that having faith and following God isn't a smooth road—everyone has to go through hardship and trials. The police pursuing my son was something God was allowing to happen. He was using this type of painful situation to perfect our faith and love—this suffering was a blessing from God. I felt calmer when I thought about it that way, and I said a prayer, ready to leave my son in God's hands and submit to His rule and arrangements.

Later on, when the police learned that my son had been printing books of God's words in the church, they listed him as a nationally wanted criminal and mobilized huge numbers of officers to search for him, proclaiming they were bound and determined to get him. This news made me so anxious and worried—how could he escape arrest if the Communist Party made him a high-priority target? I'd recently heard about a brother who was arrested and then was beaten to death by the police. With the Communist Party hating believers so much, wouldn't they really torture my son if they got their hands on him? I was getting more frightened the more I thought about it, living every day on tenterhooks. I couldn't keep food down or get any sleep, and my heart would start pounding every time I heard a police car siren. I was in a state of high anxiety during that period of time, and in poor physical health, too. A few days later, the police called our house twice to inquire about my son's whereabouts and said threateningly, menacingly, "If you guys don't hand him over, that's harboring a criminal and not a single member of your family will get away!" I was really scared when I heard that and didn't know when the

police might show up to search our home and possibly arrest me, my younger son and his wife. I was even more concerned about when they would get my older son. I kept praying to God over and over, asking Him to give me faith and strength, and asking Him to watch over my older son so he could stay strong. I thought of something from God's words after praying: **"You should not be afraid of this and that; no matter how many difficulties and dangers you might face, you are capable of remaining steady before Me, unobstructed by any hindrance, so that My will may be carried out unimpeded. This is your duty.... Now is the time that I shall test you: Will you offer your loyalty to Me? Can you loyally follow Me to the end of the road? Be not afraid; with My support, who could ever block this road?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 10). God's words strengthened my faith—God is almighty and all things are in His hands, so aren't the fates of everyone in our family in His hands, too? Without God's permission, the police couldn't do anything to us. My concerns about our family members being arrested, and my living in a constant state of fear meant I was lacking genuine faith in God. I felt calmer with the guidance of God's words. With God by my side, I had nothing to fear—I was ready to put our entire family into His hands, and I resolved that even if I were arrested, I would never sell out our brothers and sisters, never betray God!

A few months later, when the police still hadn't found my son, they started threatening to arrest our entire family. My younger son, his wife, and I had no choice but to leave our home and go into hiding. I was in total turmoil before leaving, thinking that my older son was on the run and I had no idea where he was, and now that we had to flee our home, a perfectly happy family was being totally torn apart by the CCP. I was so miserable. What's wrong with having faith and worshiping God? The Communist

Party was determined to force us to a point of ruin. They really don't want to leave believers any way to go on living—the Communist Party is so detestable! I was widowed in my 30s and struggled to raise three children on my own. I'd been working tirelessly for most of my life and I'd finally gotten through. I never thought that, at my advanced age, I'd be forced to go on the lam from the Communist Party. Leaving that way, wouldn't the Party just seize all our assets and our house? Then how would we get by? These thoughts were really painful for me. I came before God and prayed, "God! I can't let go of our possessions in my heart, and I'm worried about how I'll get by from now on. Please guide me to understand Your will." I remembered a quote from the Lord Jesus after praying: **"Whoever he be of you that forsakes not all that he has, he cannot be My disciple"** (Luke 14:33). The Lord Jesus' disciples were able to give up everything they had to follow Him. I thought of Matthew—he was a tax collector, but when the Lord Jesus called on him, he gave up all of his possessions and sacrificed everything he had to follow the Lord. And when the Lord called on Peter, he gave up his work as a fisherman to follow Him. But in the face of the Communist Party's oppression, I couldn't even let go of a few belongings. I was so lacking in faith. The birds of the air neither sow nor reap, but God cares for them—and what about us, humans? This thought helped alleviate my concerns. In the last days, God has become flesh and is expressing truths to purify and save us. I was so fortunate to be able to follow God and gain the truth and life—a bit of suffering is well worth it! The truth is a priceless treasure that can't be bought with any amount of material possessions, and I knew any amount of future hardship would be worth it.

After we left home, the police learned that I and my entire family were believers in Almighty God and they launched a city-wide search for us. We were moving from place to place in an effort to evade arrest, sometimes

moving after being somewhere for less than a month. Every time, I'd be exhausted and my back was aching. Afraid of being discovered by the police, we had to stay in those sorts of privately built, small single-story houses. In the winter, it was so cold in the house the water would freeze, and even after keeping the stove lit for a full week, the house still wasn't warm. The skin on my hands was cracking with the cold and any contact with water was really painful. The last place we moved into was a little hut for breeding baby chicks in a village that was dark and damp, rife with insects. It was so nauseating I just couldn't eat. I was reminiscing on our days at home, in a nice apartment that was warm and comfortable. Comparing that to our current circumstances was really miserable for me. I had no idea when those days would come to an end. Realizing I wasn't in the right state, I immediately came before God in prayer, asking Him to enlighten me and guide me to understand His will. Something from God's words occurred to me after praying: **"You are a created being—you should of course worship God and pursue a life of meaning. If you do not worship God but live within your filthy flesh, then are you not just a beast in human attire? Since you are a human being, you should expend yourself for God and endure all suffering! You should gladly and assuredly accept the little suffering you are subjected to today and live a meaningful life, like Job and Peter. ... You are people who pursue the right path, those who seek improvement. You are people who rise up in the nation of the great red dragon, those whom God calls righteous. Is that not the most meaningful life?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Practice (2)). God's words were really encouraging for me. I thought of Satan tempting Job—Job lost absolutely all of his family's possessions and his children were crushed to death. He himself had his entire body covered in boils. Even with such tremendous suffering, he still

praised God's name and bore a resounding witness for God. God approved of Job and blessed him. Peter's pursuit was to love and know God. He underwent hundreds of trials without ever losing faith, and ultimately was crucified upside down for God. He was able to submit unto death, giving beautiful testimony and living out a very meaningful life. But as for me, I couldn't even stand having to move a few times and suffer a bit. I didn't have any true submission to God! The misery I was enduring at the time was entirely because of the great red dragon's persecution. Instead of hating the great red dragon, I was getting negative and grumbling—how unreasonable of me! Being pursued by the great red dragon did cause me a certain amount of suffering, but I was gaining discernment over its essence, clearly seeing its demonic essence of hating and opposing God. We were created by God, so worshiping Him is right and proper. It's taking the right path in life, and spreading the gospel is to help everyone hear the voice of God and accept the truth, then they can be saved. But the Communist Party oppresses us and stands in our way at every turn, even forcing a mother from her children. I could really see that it's an evil party and a bitter enemy of God—I hated it and cursed it from the bottom of my heart. If I hadn't experienced that pain, but just kept living a peaceful life at home, I wouldn't have seen through the great red dragon's essence, and wouldn't have been able to forsake it and reject it from the heart. I was suffering a bit to follow God at that point, but I was gaining the truth and life—that suffering was incredibly meaningful. God became flesh, coming to work in the great red dragon's country, persecuted and pursued by the Communist Party, without a pillow to rest His head on. The adversity He's suffered can't be quantified. Now our family followed God and was persecuted by the Communist Party and had to go on the run, which was sharing in

Christ's hardship. This was God's elevation! I quietly resolved that no matter how much I had to suffer, I would follow God until the very end.

Later on, my daughter ended up being surveilled and followed by the police while out sharing the gospel. She managed to drop them by going into a large supermarket and changing her clothing. She was forced to flee the area after that. Before we knew it, our family had been apart, on the run for a whole year. I was constantly thinking about what sort of circumstances my older son and daughter might be in, always worried about them being arrested. I could hardly eat or get enough sleep, and my asthma flared up. I started becoming easily distracted and was often lost in thought. My younger son couldn't bear seeing me that way, so he decided to take the risk to go back home and see what was going on. After he left, I was just there waiting, hoping.... When it got to be a bit after 7 p.m. and I still hadn't seen him come back, I started to get anxious. I was wondering: Where was he? Had the police gotten him? No, after more than a year, they couldn't still be staking out our house? But I waited the entire night and he still hadn't come back. I felt certain something had happened, because he definitely didn't have anywhere else to go. If he really had been arrested, I had no idea what sort of horrible ways the police would use to torture him. They might even cripple him with their beatings. At any thought of this, I couldn't stop the tears from flowing. I wasn't able to eat or sleep for several days, but would just sit on my bed, staring outside in a total daze. I was in so much pain—I felt like a knife had gone into my heart. There was no telling if my older son was dead or alive, I had no idea if my daughter was in danger or not, and now if my younger son had been arrested, what would I do? In my pain and helplessness, I came before God to pray, and then these words of His came to mind: **“The fate of man is controlled by the hands of God. You are incapable of controlling yourself: Despite man always rushing and**

busying himself on his own behalf, he remains incapable of controlling himself. If you could know your own prospects, if you could control your own fate, would you still be a created being?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Restoring the Normal Life of Man and Taking Him to a Wonderful Destination). Thinking over this, I could see that people's fates are entirely within God's grasp, so however much we suffer and whatever situations we may encounter is all predetermined by God. No amount of worrying on my part would help. I said a prayer within my heart, willing to leave my kids in God's hands. Later on, my daughter-in-law found out from a sister in the church that my younger son had been arrested by the police staking out our house. The police took him to the station, beating and yelling at him, demanding to know our whereabouts. He didn't say anything, so the police illegally detained him for 15 days before finally releasing him. He'd just been let go. The police apparently regretted his release and so had started looking for him again. Afraid of leading them to us, my son never dared go back home, but had just stayed out on the run. I was incensed when I heard about this. We hadn't been back home in over a year, but the police were still trying to track us, to monitor us, trying everything to get their hands on us. They wanted to exterminate us. The great red dragon is so evil! The more it oppressed me, the more I could see its demonic face, and the more resolute I was to have faith and follow God.

Before long, my younger son managed to get out of the area with the brothers' and sisters' help. My daughter-in-law and I got to another province not long after that. For the sake of our safety, she had no choice but to go into hiding separately from me. Thinking of how our entire family had been torn asunder by the Communist Party was so painful for me. Especially when I saw other people being so attentive and solicitous toward their parents, I missed my kids even more. I was on the verge of collapse. I

came before God to seek, and thought of this passage of His words: **“The path God guides us along does not go straight up, but is a winding road full of potholes; God says, furthermore, that the rockier the path is, the more it can reveal our loving hearts. Yet none of us can open up such a path. In My experience, I have walked many rocky, treacherous paths and I have endured great suffering; at times I have even been so utterly grief-stricken that I wanted to cry out, but I have walked this path to this day. I believe that this is the path led by God, so I endure the torment of all the suffering and continue onward. For this is what God has ordained, so who can escape it? I do not ask to receive any blessings; all I ask is that I am able to walk the path I ought to walk according to God’s will. I do not seek to imitate others, walking the path that they walk; all I seek is that I may fulfill My devotion to walk My designated path until the end. ... The amount an individual must suffer and the distance they must walk on their path is ordained by God, and no one can really help anyone else”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (6)). Thinking over God’s words, I could see that however much suffering a person may experience, however many paths they may have to take is set by God beforehand. The windier my path may be, the more my true stature can be shown. My children were all by my side before and we had such a perfectly peaceful, united family. I was so driven in my pursuit then. But now because of the great red dragon’s oppression and pursuit, and my children being on the run, I was miserable, depressed, and full of complaints. That oppression and hardship had exposed me. It was only then that I realized that the only reason I had faith was to be blessed and graced by God, to revel in the joys of the flesh. It wasn’t to pursue the truth or submit to God at all. How was that genuine faith? If those sorts of difficult situations hadn’t exposed me that way, I never would

have seen my mistaken perspectives on pursuit in my faith. I couldn't have gained such an understanding in a peaceful environment. I finally saw that grace is a blessing from God, but even more than that, hardship and trials are God's blessing. I knew no matter how hard my path was in the future, I had to get through it by leaning on God—I had to submit to God's rule and arrangements. I kept reading God's words with other sisters regularly, and gathering and fellowshiping on God's words. I gradually started feeling better.

Some time passed, and the Communist Party once again started madly hunting for and arresting believers all over the place, sending out scouts, informers, and “red sleeve spies” everywhere. I wasn't from the area, and I was a major target. During that time, I was afraid I'd be arrested, and I was constantly in fear of my kids being arrested. I couldn't sleep at night, and sometimes I even had nightmares. I'd dream about the police torturing my children. Because of living in a state of anxiety and fear for so long, being so depressed, I got hyperthyroidism and lost so much weight I was just a bag of bones. My heart was beating pretty weakly and walking was really taxing for me. I even struggled to get up out of bed. I thought of being back at home. Whenever I got sick, my kids would all be right there for me, taking care of me, and my little grandson would be shouting, “Grandma! Grandma!” It was all so warm. But we'd all been forced apart by the Communist Party, I couldn't see my children, and I had no idea where they were. I was more upset the more I thought about it. Struggling to get up, I just knelt on my bed, weeping in pain and praying to God, “God! I'm really struggling now! I'm at my brink. Oh God, please give me the resolve and faith to take this suffering, so that I can stand strong.” I read this in God's words after my prayer: **“The utmost faith and love are required from us in this stage of work. We may stumble from the slightest carelessness,**

for this stage of work is different from all the previous ones: What God is perfecting is mankind's faith, which is both invisible and intangible. What God does is convert words to faith, to love, and to life. People must reach a point where they have endured hundreds of refinements and possess faith greater than Job's. They must endure incredible suffering and all manner of torture without ever leaving God. When they are obedient unto death, and have great faith in God, then this stage of God's work is complete" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God.

The Path ... (8)). I saw from God's words that His work in the last days is to perfect people's faith. When we experience sickness, God's good intentions lie within it; we should seek the truth and follow the example of Job's faith. Job faced such incredible trials and broke out in boils all over his body, and when he couldn't take it anymore, he sat in ashes and scraped himself with a potsherd. When Job's wife urged him to abandon his faith in God, he said, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). Job didn't have any sort of misunderstanding or blame for God—he continued to maintain his faith. But as for me, I blamed God the moment I developed hyperthyroidism. I saw how little faith I had in God, and how I didn't understand God's will. In order to save us, God has become flesh and come to earth, bearing such enormous humiliation, enduring the Communist Party's oppression and suppression and the religious world's rejection. God has sacrificed everything to save mankind, but I became negative from just a tiny bit of suffering, and I even blamed God. I owed God so much. Then I thought about saints of ages past who had been persecuted and martyred for God. They'd borne witness for God with their very lives—there was nothing more honorable than that. Even though our entire family was being persecuted by the Communist Party, we had a chance to bear witness for God. This was God's elevation. Based on our own filthiness and corruption,

based on our identity, we weren't worthy of giving testimony for God. Once I understood God's will, I didn't feel so bad anymore. A sister learned about my health issue and got some medication for me in the hospital, and brought it back for me. I started gradually getting better day by day. Thanks be to God, truly!

I was out on the run for several years, and in order to avoid the police's searches and arrest, I hid in boxes and potato cellars, and through God's miraculous protection, I dodged one dangerous situation after another. In December 2008, I was reported for spreading the gospel. It was a pretty tense situation—religious priests brought police officers to arrest us. I was wanted, so if they really arrested me, the police definitely wouldn't let me go easily. My brothers and sisters took me to a secret little village right away, and Sister Li Xinyu brought me some food and other necessities. But after a few months, Xinyu suddenly stopped coming—I didn't know why. They burned dried cow dung for heat in that place. In December it was cold, and it was 20 below zero. I was using less of the cow dung when it looked like it was nearly burned out. It was really cold inside and there was frost on the walls. And when I got up in the mornings, my head was covered with frost. I was hoping that Xinyu would show up soon, but I waited and waited, and she never did show up. It was so cold that I kept stomping in the house. I was thinking that I was a stranger in that place. I didn't even dare go out to buy firewood and I couldn't find other brothers and sisters. That area was covered in snow and there was no way for me to go out to collect firewood. If Xinyu didn't come, what could I do? Would I just freeze to death there? That thought left me feeling really chilled and helpless. I prayed and called out to God within my heart over and over again. Then I thought of the prophet Elijah—when he was in the wilderness without anything to eat or drink, God commanded ravens to bring him

bread and meat to feed him. Wasn't this something that God Himself did long ago? How was it that I lacked faith in God when I was facing that kind of situation? I read this in God's words: **"The great red dragon persecutes God and is the enemy of God, and so, in this land, those who believe in God are thus subjected to humiliation and oppression.... It is tremendously difficult for God to carry out His work in the land of the great red dragon—but it is through this difficulty that God does one stage of His work, making manifest His wisdom and His wondrous deeds, and using this opportunity to make this group of people complete. It is through people's suffering, through their caliber, and through all the satanic dispositions of the people of this filthy land that God does His work of purification and conquest, so that, from this, He may gain glory, and so that He may gain those who will bear witness to His deeds. Such is the entire significance of all the sacrifices that God has made for this group of people"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). Reading this was immediately enlightening for me. In the last days, God uses the great red dragon as a service-doer for His work of completing a group of overcomers. I'm a corrupt person, so having the chance to experience God's work, to bear witness for God under the great red dragon's oppression and arrest was such an honor from God, and it was worth any amount of suffering! Realizing that, I said a prayer to God, ready to submit to His rule and arrangements. Even if I froze to death there, I wouldn't have any complaints. Once I submitted, another sister showed up unexpectedly. I came to know Xinyu was being tracked by the police, so she didn't come back, afraid of implicating me. That other sister saw how cold that place was and took me back to stay at her home. She told me that her husband wasn't a believer and hadn't been working for years. He was determined to go out to work

now and couldn't be held back. There was no way I could be there if her husband was at home—this really was God opening up a path for me! When I heard her say this, I was so excited that tears were flowing out of my eyes. I saw that God had already arranged things for me—it was just that I lacked faith, that I got negative and weak when I ran into some difficulties. God's love is so real and I got a true taste of it.

In 2014, the Communist Party ramped up its persecution against The Church of Almighty God, mobilizing its armed police to madly arrest Christians all over the country. I started to feel concerned again for my children, and I didn't know how they were doing at the time. Then one day when I was watching a video with my sisters, as we were watching, suddenly a scene flashed by that looked to me like my older son might have been in it. I hardly dared believe my eyes—I rubbed my eyes and stared at the video again, afraid I'd miss something. Before long, my son appeared again, and this time it was a clear shot. I was certain it was him. I shouted, "Oh wow!" and then yelled, "My son, my son! He got out of the country!" Right after that, there was another shot that flashed by where I saw my younger son. I was so elated that I jumped right out of my seat. When had they left China? God really is almighty! I kept watching and saw my daughter-in-law in it, too. They'd all left the country and I didn't need to worry about their safety anymore. I was so moved that my vision was blurred with tears, and I was quietly thanking God over and over. My sisters were also happily praising God's almightiness. My two sons and my daughter-in-law were all wanted by the Communist Party, but they'd escaped abroad, right from under the Party's watch—this was God's authority and power. Before, I was always concerned for my children's safety, but that day I saw that no matter how savage Satan is, it's still under

God's mercy. If God doesn't allow it, Satan can't grab hold of us. Realizing this strengthened my faith in God.

After 16 years on the run, in 2018, my daughter risked coming home to find out what was going on, and brought back some grievous news—my 12-year-old grandson couldn't take the great red dragon's persecution, and had committed suicide. After my older son escaped, apparently the police were constantly going to my house and to the school, threatening and intimidating my grandson, trying to force him to divulge his dad's whereabouts, saying they'd put him in jail for the rest of his life if he didn't tell them. He was scared, so he started having nightmares all the time. The police also got his teachers to have his classmates ostracize and bully him. He was scared by his teachers and classmates, and even more scared to see the police stopping at nothing to question and humiliate him. After four years of terror under the police's bullying and intimidation, my grandson really couldn't take it in the end. He hanged himself, committing suicide at home. My head buzzed when I heard the news and I nearly fainted. I didn't come to for quite a while. The Communist Party, the old demon, had not only driven our entire family apart, but hadn't even spared my little grandson. He was just 12 years old, just at the age when he was full of joy and growing up, but he was driven to death by the Communist Party. I was totally grief-stricken, and full of rage for the demonic Communist Party. When my daughter saw how much pain I was in, she read this passage of God's words for me: **“In a dark society such as this, where the demons are merciless and inhumane, how could the king of devils, who kills people without batting an eye, tolerate the existence of a God who is lovely, kind, and also holy? How could it applaud and cheer the arrival of God? These lackeys! They repay kindness with hate, they began treating God as an enemy long ago, they abuse God, they are savage in**

the extreme, they have not the slightest regard for God, they plunder and pillage, they have lost all conscience, they go against all conscience, and they tempt the innocent into senselessness. Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin! ... Now is the time: Man has long since gathered all his strength, he has devoted all his efforts and paid every price for this, to tear off the hideous face of this demon and allow people, who have been blinded, and who have endured every manner of suffering and hardship, to rise up from their pain and turn their backs on this evil old devil” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). The Communist Party is God’s enemy—it’s a demon that opposes God and eats people up. It would love to seize all believers and totally wipe out God’s work—it’s dying to control all of humanity forever. God is working in the last days to save humanity, and the Communist Party is madly trying to stop that, to disrupt that. It’s desperate to totally wipe out all believers—they won’t even let a 12-year-old child go. They persecuted us to the point that our family couldn’t return home, that we were torn apart and my grandson died. The Communist Party is so evil, so malevolent with no regard for human life. It’s the prince of devils that will slaughter people without blinking an eye. I hate it from the depths of my heart, and the more it persecutes me this way, the more resolute I am to follow God and humiliate this old devil.

The Communist Party is still pursuing our family, even today. Looking back on 19 years of life on the run, God’s words have been guiding and enlightening me, giving me faith and strength, leading me to this present day. Without God’s protection, without God’s words guiding me and giving

me sustenance, I'm afraid I would have left this world long ago, that I already would have died or gone crazy. The Communist Party has been madly pursuing us in every possible way, just because we're believers in God, leaving me unable to return home and tearing my family apart. The Communist Party is so malicious—it's a God-hating, anti-God demon. I forsake it and reject it from the bottom of my heart! Being lucky enough to survive until this day is entirely thanks to God's care and protection. Only God truly loves people, and only God can really save people. I've seen how incredibly lovely God is, and no matter how difficult, how hard things may get, I'll follow God until the very end, do my duty, and repay God's love! Thanks be to God!

49. Those Days of Fighting for Name and Gain

By Zhao Fan, China

I took on responsibility for the church's watering work in June, 2020. Because our work was being impacted by a lack of waterers, I was really anxious. I thought that if I didn't make up for the lack, the leaders might think I didn't do practical work. Just as I was fretting over it, a leader gave me a candidate, saying Sister Xiaodan, who'd just been transferred over, could do watering. I was thrilled and it really put my mind at ease. I set up a meeting with Xiaodan right away to arrange for her to water newcomers.

To get the sister trained and improve our watering work quickly, I found some people to familiarize her with circumstances of the newcomers. Before long, the leader sent a message that Sister Zhou Nuo, who was responsible for video work, needed Xiaodan to go help out with making videos, and Xiaodan was on board. I was stunned to see this: I had taken care of everything, from contacting her to arranging her duties, and I'd wanted to get her up to speed right away to improve our work, but Zhou Nuo barged in partway. I thought that if Xiaodan left I'd need to find someone else to help out, and if I couldn't get a suitable person, then newcomers wouldn't be watered. What would the leaders think of me if this happened? Would my previous training of Xiaodan be in vain? This wouldn't do. I wanted to find a way to hold on to her. So I responded to the leader immediately, saying we were in dire need of waterers, and we should be weighing up the assigning of people based on the needs of work and people's strengths. Moreover, I emphasized that Xiaodan had done watering work before, so I wanted the leader to talk to Zhou Nuo about letting Xiaodan continue doing watering work. I got a response two days later that Xiaodan had a foundation for video production. She was interested in it too,

so overall, she was better suited to video production. I was really disappointed and thought that Xiaodan never would have thought of doing that if Zhou Nuo hadn't asked her to. But it was a done deal, so I had to find someone else, and fast, or else our work would suffer and the leader would certainly say I wasn't doing practical work. I reviewed the other church members and found a few sisters of good caliber who were good seekers, and would fit the bill. Among them, Sister Yang Mingyi was warm and easy to talk to, and newcomers liked gathering with her. She was a good fit for the position. I was really happy, and started training those sisters with a special focus on Mingyi. I thought I had to really stay on top of this and get her cultivated as soon as possible so everyone would see me as capable.

Although I had already found a few more sisters carrying out the work of watering, I still wanted Xiaodan back. In a gathering one day, another leader asked about Xiaodan and I felt secretly aggrieved and thought to myself: "I have to tell her about Zhou Nuo arranging for Xiaodan to make videos so she would deal with Zhou Nuo and help me get Xiaodan back. Then I will have another pair of hands for watering and we will be doing better." So I told this leader all about Zhou Nuo having Xiaodan make videos and emphasized that I'd been training her first, but Zhou Nuo snatched her away from me. Unexpectedly, she said, "The church is a single unit and can't be divided. Wherever she's sent, it's for our work, and video production needs more people, so we shouldn't be fighting. Since Xiaodan has been assigned there, we need to submit." I was disappointed to see the leader wasn't taking my side.

Later, a couple of the newly cultivated sisters did end up taking on independent watering of newcomers, so I was happy and felt like my effort hadn't been wasted and that when the leaders learned about the work, I would look good in their eyes. But to my surprise, one day my partner,

Sister Li Xiangzhen, told me that Zhou Nuo wanted Mingyi for video production. Feeling a wave of annoyance in me, I said: “I’ve already trained Mingyi, so why is Zhou Nuo taking her to make videos? She’d taken Xiaodan first, and now Mingyi. She’s taking everything I’ve worked for and is leaving me with nobody. Isn’t my effort all for nothing?” I was in total turmoil, and snapped back at Xiangzhen, “Can’t you tell Zhou Nuo that Mingyi is already doing watering, and that she should find someone else?” Embarrassed, Xiangzhen said, “Both video production and watering are really important, and it is harder to find people for video production work. We should further discuss how upcoming work should be arranged.” I thought to myself, “Further discuss what? Zhou Nuo is taking the people I wanted. I can’t even hold onto my trainees, so what will everyone think of me? This won’t do. No matter what, this time I have to talk to leadership about it and get them to weigh in, or it will be really humiliating.”

I was going to write them a letter as soon as I got home, but I just didn’t know what to write. I figured, “Forget it. I should set up a time to chat directly with Mingyi and ask her to keep working in watering, so I can hang on to her.” Just as I was about to write to Mingyi, I drew a complete blank and didn’t know what to say. I felt really uneasy and thought back over everything that had happened. Why was I so angry when my trainees were transferred to Zhou Nuo and even wanted to complain to leadership? Why was I so set on getting Mingyi back? So I said a prayer to God and started to calm myself down, and then read a passage of God’s words: **“In the house of God, all those who pursue the truth are united before God, not divided. They all work toward a common goal: fulfilling their duty, doing the work that falls to them, acting according to the truth principles, doing as God requires, and satisfying His will. If your goal is not for the sake of this, but for your own sake, for the sake of satisfying**

your selfish desires, then that is the outpouring of a corrupt satanic disposition. In God's house, duties are done according to the truth principles, while unbelievers' actions are governed by their satanic dispositions. These are two very different paths. Unbelievers keep their own counsel, each with their own aims and plans, everyone living for their own interests. That is why they all scramble for their own benefit and are unwilling to give up an inch of what they gain. They are divided, not united, because they are not out for a common goal. The intention and nature behind what they do is the same. They are all out for themselves. There is no truth that reigns in that; what does reign and is in charge in that is a corrupt satanic disposition. They are controlled by their corrupt satanic disposition and cannot help themselves, and so they fall deeper and deeper into sin. In God's house, if the principles, methods, motivation, and starting point of your actions were no different from those of the unbelievers, if you were also toyed with, controlled, and manipulated by a corrupt satanic disposition, and if the starting point of your actions were your own interests, reputation, pride, and status, then you would perform your duty no differently from the way unbelievers do things" (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Then I reflected on how I'd been acting recently. Wasn't I in a state of fighting with others for my own face and status? As soon as I knew Xiaodan was coming to our church, my first thought was that after training her up, the team's results could be improved and that I could thereby prove my skills, gaining the leaders' approval. So I spared no effort in her training. When I found out Zhou Nuo had arranged for her to be transferred to video production, I was afraid of our work suffering if I couldn't find another good candidate, then I'd look bad in front of leadership and lose my position. I became biased against Zhou Nuo

and tried to get leadership to return Xiaodan to me. Then I snapped when I heard that Mingyi was going to be transferred, and even wanted to complain to leadership and get her back, all to maintain my name and status. I was acting just like an unbeliever, fighting for my name and status, living out a hideous satanic likeness. God's house cultivates people so brothers and sisters can make use of their strengths and do their part in spreading the gospel. But I treated cultivating people as an outlet for my name and status, vying with others to protect my own face and status. That's not normal humanity! I had to ask myself why I was always fighting for my face and status with other people. In my seeking, I read this in God's words: **"When antichrists compete for church leadership positions and prestige among God's chosen people, they use every means they can to attack others and elevate themselves. They do not consider how badly they may harm the work of God's house and the life entry of God's chosen people. They only consider whether their ambitions and desires can be satisfied, and whether their own status and reputation can be secured. Their role in churches and among God's chosen people is as demons, as the evil, it is as lackeys of Satan. They are absolutely not people who genuinely believe in God, nor are they followers of God, let alone are they people who love and accept the truth. When their intentions and goals have yet to be achieved, they never reflect on and know themselves, they never reflect on whether their intentions and goals are in line with the truth, they never search for how to walk the path of pursuit of the truth to achieve salvation. It is not with a submissive state of mind that they believe in God and choose the path they ought to take. Instead, they rack their brains, thinking: 'How can I get into the position of a leader or a worker? How can I compete with the leaders and workers of the church? How can I mislead and control**

God's chosen people, and turn Christ into a mere figurehead? How can I secure a place for myself in the church? How can I make sure that I have a firm footing in the church and gain status, guarantee that I succeed and do not fail, and ultimately achieve my goal of controlling God's chosen people and establishing my own kingdom?' These are the things that antichrists spend their days and nights thinking about" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). **"Antichrists give serious consideration to how to treat the truth principles, God's commissions, and the work of God's house, or how to deal with the things they face. They do not consider how to satisfy God's will, how to keep from damaging the interests of God's house, how to satisfy God, or how to benefit the brothers and sisters; these are not the things they consider. What do antichrists consider? Whether their own status and reputation will be affected, and whether their prestige will be lowered. If doing something according to the truth principles benefits the work of the church and the brothers and sisters, but would cause their own reputation to suffer and cause many people to realize their true stature and know what sort of nature essence they have, then they will definitely not act in accordance with the truth principles. If doing some practical work will cause more people to think highly of them, look up to them and admire them, allow them to gain even greater prestige, or enable their words to carry authority and make more people submit to them, then they will choose to do it that way; otherwise, they will never choose to disregard their own interests out of consideration for the interests of God's house or of the brothers and sisters. This is the nature essence of antichrists. Isn't it selfish and despicable? In any situation, antichrists see their status and reputation as of utmost importance. No one can compete with them"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing

Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). The word of God exposes antichrists as incredibly selfish, putting their own interests above all else. If anyone impacts their name and status, they'll rack their brains to fight with them, without any thought to what would benefit the church and brothers and sisters. I reflected on myself and realized I was acting just like an antichrist. I wanted to arrange for Xiaodan and Mingyi to water newcomers, using them to improve my work performance and gain the leaders' approval. When Zhou Nuo transferred them, I worried about my work results being impacted, in turn endangering my name and status, and so I wanted to go head-to-head with her to get the two sisters back, without thinking about whether my behavior might harm the interests of the church. I was only thinking of my own name and status. It was so selfish, totally lacking in humanity and reason. Brothers and sisters are no one's private property. Their caliber and strengths were all determined by God, and given to them for His own work. There's no "This one is mine, that one is yours" or "First come, first served." People should go wherever they're needed in the church. That's clearly right. It was reasonable and proper that Zhou Nuo was following the principles and training people for the church based on their strengths. But I thought that because I'd chosen to train those two sisters up first, no one should touch them. I even waved the flag of training people for the church, using brothers and sisters like my personal assistants, using them to fulfill my own ambitions and desires to get people to admire me. When Zhou Nuo's actions impacted my name and status, I tried tactics to stand in her way, and vented my frustration. Wasn't that just like church clergy who claim "These are my sheep, and no one can steal them"? Pastors and elders do their best to resist and condemn God's work in the last days to protect their status and keep their living, keeping believers from investigating the true way, keeping congregants firmly controlled within

their grasp. I wanted to keep those I'd trained firmly within my grasp for the leaders' approval and church members' esteem, treating them like my own personal property, and not letting them be transferred. How was I any different from those clergy members? Wasn't I on an antichrist's path against God? I broke out in a cold sweat when I realized this. I saw how selfish and despicable I was, that I wasn't upholding the interests of the church at all, but just my own status. I was blinded by my desire for name and status—how dangerous. I thought of the antichrists who were expelled because they unrepentantly pursued name and status and ended up doing too much evil. If I kept on that path, I knew I'd end up the same way.

I read this passage of God's words: **“When you have the constant thought and desire to compete for status, then you must realize what bad things this kind of state will lead to if left unsolved. So waste no time in searching for the truth, overcome your desire to compete for status while it is in the nascent stage, and replace it with practicing the truth. When you practice the truth, your desire and ambition to compete for status will be diminished, and you will not disturb the work of the church. In this way, your actions will be remembered and approved of by God”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). The word of God gave me a path of practice. When I was fighting for my personal interests, I had to pray to God right away and forsake myself, to let go of my own desires, seek truth principles, and follow them. In fact, no matter where Xiaodan and Mingyi were assigned, it was to cultivate people for the church, and the end goal was to bring out the strengths of each of them so they perform duties as best as possible and bear witness to God. I should be happy, not fight for my own name and status. And cultivation in the church is principled. It's done based on the needs of the church's work, and according to people's individual strengths. People's suitability for any

duty should be weighed based on their strengths. If someone has multiple talents, then they should be put into duties in accordance with where they are most needed, which duty needs more people, which job needs urgent cooperation, and also which duty they are willing to fulfill. There aren't many people with the strengths for video production. But for watering, people with pure understanding who are clear about the truths that involve the visions of God's work, who are loving and patient, can do well. We have more candidates for watering work than video production. Xiaodan had experience in image editing, so she had some skills for video production. She also liked making videos, so it was reasonable for her to be put in that duty. Even though I lost Xiaodan and Mingyi, I could still find other brothers and sisters to cultivate within the church. It just needed a little more time and effort. I prayed to God after understanding all that. I was ready to correct my motives, follow principles in my duty, and stop my struggle with Zhou Nuo for my own face and status.

Zhou Nuo sent out a message a couple days later saying another church had transferred a couple people for her, so she could let Xiaodan and Mingyi return. She said they could be reassigned to other duties according to their strengths. Hearing this news, I felt deeply ashamed. After that, I arranged for those two sisters to come back to water newcomers. Not long after, I heard the church leader was going to arrange for Mingyi to draw pictures. I thought to myself, "Mingyi is so good at watering, so why would she be sent off for that duty? If she is transferred, won't I have wasted my effort in training her up? I need to talk with her and ask her to stay in watering." When these thoughts surfaced, I realized I was fighting for name and status again, so I quickly said a prayer before God, asking Him to guide me to forsake myself and put the interests of the church first. Wherever Mingyi was sent, it would certainly be for what the church needed. I

couldn't work for name and status, but I should submit. I felt much more at ease when I thought about it that way. I saw that leader later and she said that Mingyi was good at drawing pictures, so based on the principles, she was more suitable for that duty. I wasn't angry or disappointed to hear that, but I smiled and said, "Thank God! Before, I know I would have fought for my name and status, but through what's revealed in God's words, I've realized how selfish I've been, how it disgusts God, and I know that no matter what arrangements are made by the church, it's done based on the principles. Mingyi is good at drawing pictures, so putting her in that duty is according to principles, and I don't mind." The leader smiled after hearing me say that.

This experience really showed me that considering the interests of the church and brothers and sisters instead of fighting for my name and status leaves me feeling at ease, and at peace in my heart. Thank God!

50. A Bitter Lesson From Following Man Instead of God

By Theresa, Germany

When I first became a church leader, I was really happy to see that Callie would be supervising my work. I had heard her fellowship in gatherings before and felt that she had a really good understanding of God's words, that her fellowship was clear and she was good at talking about self-knowledge. The other brothers and sisters also said that she had good caliber and pursued the truth. Also, she had been a leader the entire time I'd known her, so I really admired her; I felt like she pursued the truth and had the truth reality, that in everything she did, she probably sought to act in accordance with the principles. So as long as Callie was the one arranging a task for me, I'd go take care of it immediately. But later on, after working with her for a period of time, I found that she didn't get practical work done, and in general didn't fellowship on the truth with us or ask us about our states or any difficulties in our work. When someone mentioned issues to her, she would either disdainfully say so-and-so was lacking caliber or so-and-so had an arrogant disposition and wasn't compliant. If she didn't address the issue by scolding them, she'd just change their duty. That left a lot of brothers and sisters feeling constrained by her. I felt that she appeared to have some issues, but then I just figured that she was probably stressed from being too busy with her duty, and I didn't give it much more thought. Since I looked up to her and admired her, and I wasn't seeking the truth in my actions, before I knew it I was doing evil alongside her.

One time Callie came to see me out of the blue and said there was an extremely important matter that I needed to go attend to right away—some brothers and sisters had told an upper leader that there was a sister in our

church who was sharing the gospel in an unprincipled way. Callie said to me, “First go and deal with her and dissect the nature of her behavior, and then change her duty.” I was thinking that that sister was just learning how to share the gospel, so the reason this problem was cropping up was because there were some principles she hadn’t grasped yet. Just directly dismissing her wasn’t the right approach—shouldn’t we fellowship with her and help her first? But knowing how long Callie had been a leader, I thought she must have a more accurate view of things, so I went to dismiss that sister, like Callie said. There was another time when a gathering group needed to choose a group leader, and Callie told me that Joan couldn’t be a candidate because there were some security risks with her. Joan wasn’t willing to accept this arrangement and expressed her dissatisfaction in a later gathering. After Callie found about it, without even fellowshipping on the truth with Joan, she just said that she didn’t have a good disposition and asked me to collect the brothers’ and sisters’ assessments of her right away. Later, Callie said Joan wouldn’t let go of this and was nitpicking at leaders’ and workers’ faults, and didn’t self-reflect or gain self-awareness. So based on her behavior, she should be barred from attending gatherings and spend time at home in reflection. At the time I also felt that Joan was pretty arrogant, but I didn’t look into whether she really was behaving like that all the time, much less fellowship and help her. I just went along with what Callie said and forbade her from attending gatherings. There was another time later on when Callie and her partners suddenly called me and a few other church leaders together to read us an assessment of Adalyn, who was in charge of general affairs. She said Adalyn was an antichrist and asked us to share our opinions, whether we agreed with expelling her. I was pretty shocked to hear that. I’d had a couple of interactions with Adalyn, and she’d seemed to really take on a burden in her duty—how could she

become an antichrist? Callie and her partners said that Adalyn was extremely arrogant and all her work was to gain power. She didn't put her heart into her own work, but was always sharing fellowship on the truth with the brothers and sisters from other churches to resolve their issues. Callie said she was just trying to win people over, and that she was doing this to mislead people and establish a place for herself in people's hearts, and so on. Hearing from the assessments that Adalyn frequently shared fellowship to address problems, I thought to myself, "That seems pretty normal to me. How could that make her an antichrist?" But then again, I thought I'd only encountered Adalyn a couple of times, while Callie and her co-workers were in touch with her a lot in their duties. They must have a better understanding than me, and since Callie understood the truth, and her view of things was more accurate, not to mention that she had discussed and determined this with several co-workers, it had to be right. So, without doing any seeking, I expressed support for expelling Adalyn.

Then one day I suddenly heard that Callie and some other co-workers had been dismissed. This was quite a surprise for me and I had no idea why it had happened. An upper leader came to speak with me before long, saying I'd been reported by some brothers and sisters as well. She also said that banning Joan from attending gatherings was not in line with the principles, that it was oppressing her. The leader asked me to take her back into the church and fellowship with the others about the incident. I was taken aback that I'd handled things with Joan incorrectly, because it was something that Callie and the others had all reached agreement on. How could it be wrong? If so, wasn't that disrupting and disturbing the work of the church? I'd never imagined that I could be running around busy with my duty day after day, yet ultimately cause a disruption. I felt afraid, uneasy, and really uncomfortable. I prayed to God, "Oh God! This is really

unexpected and I don't know what Your will is in this. Please guide me to learn whatever lesson I can." I didn't have any significant self-awareness at the time, but I had, after all, treated Joan in an unprincipled way. That was unfair and was very hurtful for her. So the following day, I apologized to Joan and took her back into the church. I also acknowledged my mistake to the other brothers and sisters. A brother said to me, very disappointed, "You're a church leader, but not only did you fail to protect the brothers and sisters, you also went along with Callie in doing evil. You're on a destructive path and you're going to drag us all down into hell along with you. I just can't trust you anymore." What he said went straight to the heart for me and was really upsetting, but I knew that situation had to have come from God, so I should submit to it.

And so, I calmed myself down and reflected: Why did I follow Callie in doing evil—where did the problem actually lie? I read a passage of God's words later on that opened my eyes a bit. God's words say: **"What you admire is not the humility of Christ, but those false shepherds of prominent standing. You do not adore the loveliness or wisdom of Christ, but those libertines who wallow in the filth of the world. You laugh at the pain of Christ who has no place to lay His head, but you admire those corpses that hunt for offerings and live in debauchery. You are not willing to suffer alongside Christ, but you gladly throw yourself into the arms of those reckless antichrists, though they only supply you with flesh, words, and control. Even now, your heart still turns toward them, toward their reputation, toward their status, toward their influence. And yet you continue to hold an attitude whereby you find the work of Christ hard to swallow and you are unwilling to accept it. This is why I say that you lack the faith to acknowledge Christ. The reason you have followed Him to this day is**

only because you had no other option. A series of lofty images are forever towering in your heart; you cannot forget their every word and deed, nor their influential words and hands. They are, in your heart, forever supreme and forever heroes. But this is not so for the Christ of today. He is forever insignificant in your heart, and forever undeserving of fear. For He is far too ordinary, has far too little influence, and is far from lofty” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God.

Are You a True Believer in God?). What God reveals in His words helped me see that although I was a believer, God had no place in my heart. What I worshiped was status and power, a lofty image and someone who is a good talker. When I initially saw that Callie was gifted and articulate, that she could fellowship well and had been a leader for a long time, I mistakenly believed she understood the truth and had the truth reality, so whatever she did had to be in line with the principles. That’s why, when she arranged for me to do something, I just went and did what she said without giving it a second thought, or even seeking the truth principles. I especially had never considered applying discernment to her. On the surface, I was reading God’s words every day and working on my duty from morning till night, but the principles I applied in my duty and my standard for evaluating things weren’t based on God’s words. Instead, I listened to Callie in all things and did whatever she said. Just like when I handled the matter of that sister who was sharing the gospel: I had a sense at the time that just directly dismissing her wasn’t appropriate, but since that was Callie’s arrangement, I denied myself and blindly followed her. And I didn’t seek the truth principles in the matter of Joan either, but just did what Callie wanted, banning her from gatherings. Then there was the matter of voting on Adalyn’s expulsion. Hearing Callie say that Adalyn was an antichrist, though it didn’t make sense to me and seemed problematic, I thought that

Callie had discernment and better insight into people and things than I did. It was also something that she and other co-workers had decided together through fellowship, so I didn't think they could be wrong. I did evil alongside Callie even in such a huge matter as expelling someone; I agreed to kick Adalyn out of the church, nearly ruining her chance at salvation. I didn't find out until later that Adalyn had a sense of righteousness, and she had exposed and reported the evil deeds of Callie and her gang. They not only refused to accept that, but worked behind the scenes to retaliate against her and get her kicked out. I wasn't intentionally punishing Adalyn like they had, but I didn't seek the truth, either. I took a stand that directly helped Callie and the others retaliate against and do harm to Adalyn. I had a part in their evil. In my faith, there was no place in my heart for God or His words; I just worshiped talent, experience, power, and status. I listened to anyone with status and authority, revolving around them like a lackey. I wasn't a true believer at all. God is a God who hates evil, and I believed in God but was worshiping and following a person, even capable of following her in doing evil and going against God. At that point I realized that this was a serious problem of mine, and if I didn't repent, I would certainly be rejected and cast out by God. I learned later on that Callie and the people she was working with didn't do practical work, were rash and autocratic, and arbitrarily oppressed and lashed out at others. They wantonly edited the brothers' and sisters' assessments, embellishing them, fabricating evidence, in an effort to expel Adalyn, who had exposed and reported them. They controlled elections through covert manipulations, and promoted and dismissed people as they wished. They'd committed a great deal of evil; it was determined that they were antichrists and were permanently expelled from the church. The leader then asked the other brothers and sisters for their opinions on how I should be handled. Based on how I'd been behaving

in my duty and the background of my actions, they said I'd been misled and agreed to give me a chance to repent and to let me stay in the church and keep doing a duty. I was really grateful. I'd been acting without seeking the truth, going along with antichrists in their evil, but the church didn't kick me out. I was still given an opportunity to repent. I was really grateful to God for His mercy.

Later I read some of God's words that gave me some discernment over the essence of Callie and her gang. God's words say: **“What is the main objective of an antichrist when they attack and exclude a dissenter? They seek to create a situation in the church where there are no voices contrary to their own, in which their power, their leadership status, and their words are all absolute. Everyone must heed them, and even if they have a difference of opinion, they must not express it, but let it fester in their heart. Anyone who dares to openly disagree with them becomes the antichrist's enemy, and they will think of any way they can to make things hard for them, and can't wait to make them disappear. This is one of the ways that antichrists attack and exclude a dissenter in order to shore up their status and protect their power. They think, ‘It's fine for you to have different opinions, but you can't go around talking about them as you please, much less compromise my power and status. If you have something to say, you can say it to me in private. If you say it in front of everyone and cause me to lose face, you are asking for trouble, and I'll have to take care of you!’ What kind of disposition is this? Antichrists do not permit others to speak freely. If they have an opinion—whether about the antichrist or anything else—they cannot just bring it up at random; they must consider the antichrist's face. If not, the antichrist will brand them an enemy, and attack and exclude them. What kind of nature is this? It is the nature of an antichrist. And**

why do they do this? They do not allow the church to have any alternative voices, they do not permit any dissenters in the church, they do not allow God's chosen ones to openly fellowship the truth and discern people. What they fear most is being exposed and discerned by people; they are constantly trying to consolidate their power and the status they have in people's hearts, which they feel must never be shaken. They could never tolerate anything that threatens or affects their pride, reputation, or status and value as a leader. Is this not a manifestation of the malicious nature of antichrists? Not content with the power they already possess, they consolidate and secure it and seek eternal domination. Not only do they want to control others' behavior, but also their hearts" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Two: They Attack and Exclude Dissenters). Reading God's words gave me some understanding of antichrists' vicious dispositions. Wanting to secure their own positions, they see as enemies those who have discernment over them, who are able to give them suggestions and expose them, and will stop at nothing to lash out at them and oppress them. They even put false accusations of all sorts of wrongdoing on them to get them removed from the church to achieve their goal of holding onto their power in the church. This is the most insidious and malevolent aspect of antichrists. I could see that antichrists have vicious humanity, fierce dispositions, and really despise the truth and all positive things. Callie and the others had behaved exactly like what God describes. When some brothers and sisters gained discernment, then gave them suggestions or reported them, they not only failed to accept this from God and reflect on themselves, but wantonly suppressed them and had them kicked out. Adalyn noticed that they were violating the principles in their actions, so she reported and exposed them, after which they started suppressing her, and preparing materials to have her kicked out of the

church. But their evidence was insufficient and it wasn't approved by the church. They wouldn't give up, but in an effort to get rid of Adalyn they even edited the others' assessments of her, embellishing things and twisting the facts, claiming Adalyn fellowshiping and helping others was her being an antichrist leading people astray. They slapped labels on her and made arbitrary condemnations; they wouldn't rest until they'd gotten Adalyn removed from the church. These antichrists were just like the great red dragon, oppressing and attacking anyone who disagrees with them, framing them and doing them harm just to solidify their own positions. They wouldn't allow any other voices in a church that they held power over, and would punish anyone who gave them suggestions. And since Carson, another church member, would frequently suggest things to them and call out their issues, they worked against him behind the scenes, getting him to self-isolate and reflect on himself, and not allowing him to do a duty. Fuming with rage, they even said that though he was isolated at home, they still wouldn't let go, and insisted on clearing him out of the church, and wouldn't stop until they had. There was another church leader who suffered from their punishment and oppression because she had a different opinion on clearing Carson out—they dismissed her from her duty.

I saw how vicious Callie and her group of antichrists really were, that they were capable of doing all sorts of inhumane things to hurt the brothers and sisters so that they could keep hold of their positions. They weren't even human. I asked myself: How could I have adulated and followed such a malevolent antichrist in doing evil with her? Why did I, as a believer, still worship and follow a human being? Why did I idolize an antichrist who was doing so much evil? Later through prayer and seeking, I gained some understanding of the root of my failure. I read this in God's words: **“Some people are able to bear hardships, can pay the price, are outwardly**

very well-behaved, are quite well-respected, and enjoy the admiration of others. Would you say that this kind of outward behavior can be regarded as putting the truth into practice? Could one determine that such people are satisfying God's will? Why is it that time and time again people see such individuals and think that they are satisfying God, walking the path of putting the truth into practice, and keeping to God's way? Why do some people think this way? There is only one explanation for it. What explanation is that? It is that for a great many people, certain questions—such as what it means to put the truth into practice, what it means to satisfy God, and what it means to genuinely possess the truth reality—are not very clear. Thus, there are some people who are often deceived by those who outwardly seem spiritual, noble, lofty, and great. As for people who can speak eloquently of words and doctrines, and whose speech and actions seem worthy of admiration, those who are deceived by them have never looked at the essence of their actions, the principles behind their deeds, or what their goals are. Moreover, they have never looked at whether these people truly submit to God, nor have they ever determined whether or not these people genuinely fear God and shun evil. They have never discerned the humanity essence of these people. Rather, beginning with the first step of getting acquainted with them, they have, little by little, come to admire and venerate these people, and in the end, these people become their idols. Furthermore, in some people's minds, the idols whom they worship—and who they believe can abandon their families and jobs, and who seem superficially able to pay the price—are the ones who are truly satisfying God and who can really attain good outcomes and good destinations. In their minds, these idols are the ones whom God praises” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. How to Know God's Disposition

and the Results His Work Shall Achieve). **“There is only one root cause which makes people have such ignorant actions and viewpoints, or one-sided opinions and practices—and today I will tell you about it: The reason is that, although people may follow God, pray to Him every day, and read His utterances every day, they do not actually understand His will. Herein lies the root of the problem. If someone understood God’s heart and knew what He likes, what He loathes, what He wants, what He rejects, what kind of person He loves, what kind of person He dislikes, what kind of standard He uses when making demands of people, and what kind of approach He takes for perfecting them, then could that person still have their own personal opinions? Could people like this simply go and worship someone else? Could an ordinary human become their idol? People who understand God’s will possess a slightly more rational viewpoint than that. They are not going to arbitrarily idolize a corrupted person, nor will they, while walking the path of putting the truth into practice, believe that blindly adhering to a few simple rules or principles is tantamount to putting the truth into practice”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. How to Know God’s Disposition and the Results His Work Shall Achieve). **“Leaders and workers, whatever their rank, are still common people. If you see them as your immediate superiors, if you feel that they are superior to you, that they are more competent than you, and that they should lead you, that they are in all ways a cut above anyone else, then you are wrong—that is a delusion. And what consequences will this delusion visit on you? It will lead you unconsciously to measure your leaders against requirements that do not conform with reality, and to be unable to treat correctly the problems and deficiencies they have; at the same time, without your knowing it, you will also be profoundly drawn to their flair, gifts, and**

talents, such that before you know it, you are worshiping them, and they are your God. That path, from when they start to become your role model, the object of your worship, to when you become one of their followers, is one that will lead you unconsciously away from God. And even as you gradually move away from God, you will still believe that you are following God, that you are in His house, that you are in His presence, when actually, you will have been drawn away by minions of Satan, by antichrists. You will not even sense it. This is a very dangerous state of affairs” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Six). God’s words exposed my fallacious thinking. I assessed whether people pursued the truth or not just based on their external behavior, but I didn’t exercise discernment over their nature essence, or look at their goals and motivations behind their actions. I thought that if a person was able to make sacrifices, expend themselves, fellowship on their understanding of God’s words, and express a lot of self-awareness, seeming like a very spiritual person, then they were someone who pursued the truth and had the truth reality. That’s why when I saw in my interactions with Callie that she was good at fellowshiping and well-spoken, and her understanding that she shared in gatherings made a lot of sense, I thought she pursued the truth and had the truth reality. Even more pathetic, I mistakenly believed that having been a leader for all that time meant she pursued the truth. Because of all these fallacious views, I went from not knowing her, to admiring and worshiping her, to ultimately going along with her in doing evil. I didn’t evaluate her or try to discern her essence according to God’s words, but was going by my own notions and imaginings. Though I was a believer, I worshiped and followed a mere person. I’d followed an antichrist, committing so much evil. I was incredibly numb and foolish! When I expressed support for expelling Adalyn from the church, it wasn’t as if I had no awareness at all. I

had some suspicions, but I didn't go with the Holy Spirit's guidance and seek the truth. Instead, I went by notions and imaginings, thinking that leaders and workers understand the truth and have the truth reality, and that they can see issues accurately. So without trying to apply any discernment I blindly went along with Callie and agreed to kicking Adalyn out. In such a major matter that directly involves whether someone can attain salvation or not, inappropriately removing someone could destroy their chance at salvation—that's a heinous sin! I had treated her life like nothing, rashly agreeing to her expulsion. She was a true believer, but I had nearly gotten her removed from the church. What a huge transgression! I not only owed her a debt, but I had offended God. I wasn't intentionally doing evil and punishing Adalyn, but by casually agreeing, I was harming her along with the antichrist Callie—I was the antichrist's accomplice. Though it was nothing more than just declaring a stance, it revealed a very vicious nature within me and that I was utterly lacking love for others. Brothers and sisters like Adalyn, who have a sense of righteousness and are able to uphold the work of the church should receive protection, because God saves those who pursue the truth and have a sense of righteousness. But I was acting as Satan's minion, agreeing to her expulsion. By acting that way, I was standing on the side of those antichrist demons, working against God. As a church leader, I should have been upholding the church's interests in all things, and protecting the brothers and sisters from being harmed by antichrists and evildoers. But I followed them in wantonly doing evil, oppressing people and getting them kicked out. This was harmful to the brothers and sisters. It was scary for me to see that I'd done such evil things. I didn't seek the truth or have a God-fearing heart; I'd been totally unaware of committing such great evil, even thinking I was upholding the church's work. I was so muddled and detestable! It was just like what that

brother had said, that I was on a path of destruction and would drag others down into hell with me. Based on my behavior, dismissing me and removing me from the church wouldn't be overboard, but God gave me a chance to repent, allowing me to continue doing a duty in the church. I was really grateful for God's mercy and salvation for me. At the same time, I also genuinely understood that focusing on external gifts and abilities, blindly adoring a leader, worshiping power, and not seeking the truth in the face of problems truly is a dangerous thing. I could be misled and used by antichrists and evildoers at any time. In essence, by worshiping and following a person, I was following Satan and being an enemy to God. If I still didn't repent, I'd be rejected and cast out by God. The more I thought about it, the more I felt that this failure of mine wasn't simply revealing some corruption or making a mistake—it was a great evil, and I'd nearly done myself in.

I read more of God's words later that showed me the right approach to leaders and workers. God's words say: **“When someone is chosen to be a leader by the brothers and sisters, or is promoted by the house of God to do a certain piece of work or perform a certain duty, this does not mean that they have a special status or identity, or that the truths they understand are deeper and more numerous than those of other people—much less that this person is able to submit to God, and will not betray Him. Naturally, it does not mean, either, that they know God, and are someone who fears God. They have attained none of this, in fact; the promotion and cultivation is merely promotion and cultivation in the most straightforward sense, and is not equivalent to them having been destined and validated by God. Their promotion and cultivation simply means they have been promoted, and await cultivation. And the ultimate outcome of this cultivation depends on whether this person**

pursues the truth, and on whether they are capable of choosing the path of pursuing the truth. Thus, when someone in the church is promoted and cultivated to be a leader, they are merely promoted and cultivated in the straightforward sense; it does not mean that they are already a qualified leader, or a competent one, that they are already capable of undertaking the work of a leader, and can do real work—that is not the case. Most people do not see clearly about these things, and they look up to these promoted ones relying on their imaginings, but this is a mistake. No matter how many years they may have believed, do those who are promoted really possess the truth reality? Not necessarily. Are they able to bring to fruition the work arrangements of the house of God? Not necessarily. Do they have a sense of responsibility? Are they possessed of commitment? Are they able to submit to God? When they encounter an issue, are they able to search for the truth? All of this is unknown. Do these people have God-fearing hearts? And just how great are their God-fearing hearts? Are they liable to follow their own will when they do things? Are they able to seek God? During the time that they perform the work of leaders, do they frequently come before God to search for the will of God? Are they able to guide people in entry into the truth reality? They are certainly incapable of such things right away. They haven't received training and have too little experience, so they are incapable of these things. This is why promoting and cultivating someone doesn't mean they already understand the truth, nor is it saying that they are already capable of performing their duty satisfactorily. ... What is the point of Me saying this? In order to tell everyone that they must correctly approach the various types of talents promoted and cultivated in God's house, and must not be harsh in their demands of these people.

Naturally, people must not be unrealistic in their opinion of them either. It is foolish to be overly appreciative or reverential of them, nor is it humane or realistic to be overly harsh in your demands toward them. So what is the most rational way to act toward them? To think of them as ordinary people and, when there is a problem that needs to be searched, to fellowship with them and learn from each other's strengths and complement each other. In addition, it is everyone's responsibility to keep an eye on whether leaders and workers are doing real work, whether they use the truth to solve problems; these are the standards and principles for measuring whether a leader or worker is up to par. If a leader or worker is capable of dealing with and solving general problems, then they are competent. But if they can't even handle and fix ordinary problems, they are not fit to be a leader or worker, and must be quickly dismissed. Choose someone else, and do not delay the work of the house of God. Delaying the work of the house of God is hurting yourself and others, it is good for no one" (The Word, Vol. 5. The

Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (5)). I learned from God's words that a person being elected as a leader or worker, or promoted to do some job doesn't mean that they have the truth reality, that they're devoted to God or fear Him. If they don't pursue the truth, they will become a false leader or antichrist, and will be exposed and cast out. Leaders and workers have more chances to practice, and take on more of a burden to experience God's work. But none of them have been perfected—they have corrupt dispositions just like everyone else, so before they've gained the truth and achieved dispositional change, they may be willful in their work and go against the principles. They all need to go through God's judgment and revelation, pruning and dealing with, and to receive oversight from others. If leaders and workers do act in line with the truth principles

and are upholding the work of the church, God's chosen people should support them and cooperate in their work. If they go against the principles, take the wrong path, and don't do practical work, they need to be dealt with and exposed, to see if they're able to accept the truth, to repent and change. If they're able to repent and change, that means they are right people and can accept the truth. But if they don't, if they lash out at and oppress others, they are not right people and they need to be reported and exposed. Only treating leaders and workers like this according to the truth principles is in line with God's will. But before, I hadn't been looking at things based on God's words. I didn't have any discernment over Callie and the others, but just blindly adored them, leading to me following antichrists in doing irreparable evil. Reading God's words gave me a path of practice, and from then on I wanted to focus on seeking truth principles in all things, to look at things and people according to the words of God, to stop being so foolish and ignorant and blindly following others like I had in the past.

I later noticed that when an upper leader fellowshipped with us on an election of church leaders, she was really anxious to get everything done without a focus on fellowshipping the truth principles. Once when she fellowshipped in a gathering on adjusting someone's duty, by the time she finished her fellowship, just half of the church members had arrived, and then she had us state our positions. Since half of the people hadn't heard her initial fellowship and didn't know the relevant truth principles, there was no way they could announce where they stood. The gathering couldn't continue on and it created a really awkward atmosphere. I saw she wasn't leading the brothers and sisters to enter into the truth principles, but was in a rush to finish handling the matter and be done with it. I remembered my experience with being misled by an antichrist and the consequences brought about by blindly following her. I didn't want to just arbitrarily go along with

someone before I'd gained clarity on the principles. So, I sought out a few sisters for some seeking on the matter together. One of them said that this leader had handled elections in other churches the same way, not following the principles. I thought that since this leader had been carrying out work without gaining support from the others, that meant there was an issue with her. As a leader, her failure to guide us in entering into the truth would impact the entire church, so I should point out these problems to her. But then I worried that she might suppress me if I made suggestions to her. However, thinking of how I'd done evil along with antichrists in the past, I felt afraid of blindly following a person again, and failing to uphold the interests of the church. I felt really conflicted. So I came before God and prayed, seeking a path of practice. I saw this in God's words after that: **"What is the attitude that people should have in terms of how to treat a leader or worker? If what a leader or worker does is right and in line with the truth, then you can obey them; if what they do is wrong and not in line with the truth, then you should not obey them and you can expose them, oppose them and raise a different opinion. If they are unable to do practical work or do evil deeds that cause a disturbance to church work, and are revealed to be a false leader, a false worker, or an antichrist, then you can discern, expose and report them"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Three: They Exclude and Attack Those Who Pursue the Truth). God's words provided me with principles to put into practice. If a leader or worker is behaving inappropriately, you can give them fellowship on the truth out of love, to help them—this is in line with God's will. Thinking over my past failures made it very clear for me that this was a chance for me to put the truth into practice. I should act in accordance with God's word, and not hold back my suggestions because I was afraid of suffering oppression. And so, I got in touch with that leader and told her all about the problems I'd noticed

in her work over that time; she accepted all of it. In a gathering a few days later, I heard her fellowship that she'd received some pointers and help from church members for her duty, and through self-reflection saw that the path she'd been on and her work had been problematic recently. The issues and flaws I'd pointed out to her were part of her reflection, and from that she sought to understand the principles and knew how to handle and approach similar problems. I was really happy and gave thanks to God for guiding me to practice the truth. I felt very at peace in my heart.

I realized through these experiences that as a believer who didn't place importance upon seeking the truth, but blindly adulated and followed other people, I was likely to commit evil and work against God at any time. I was also able to see God's wisdom; He allows antichrists to surface in the church so that we can develop discernment, become able to cast off Satan's forces, and no longer be misled and controlled by antichrists. Once we can discern antichrists and stop indiscriminately worshiping them, then those antichrists' service is complete and they can be cleared out of the church. Though I'd experienced some failures and stumbled, and it was poignant for me to think about, through these missteps I was able to shift my mistaken thinking and perspectives, which allowed me to stop blindly worshiping and following other people. I became able to seek the truth principles when things cropped up and seek to be someone who truly follows God. Gaining all of this was entirely because of God's guidance. I give thanks to God!

51. I've Welcomed the Lord's Return!

By Li Deming, China

My family has been Catholic for four generations, and in the late 70s, our house became a gathering place, and both my father and uncle served as church deacons. Every major holy day, the grown-ups would put me on a bike to ride to a site about 20 miles away to observe the holy day. I remember the priest would often tell us in Mass: "The last days are already upon us, we have to be on the alert all the time, keep our souls cleansed, and not commit any major sins, because the Lord could come back down on a cloud and take us up into heaven at any moment." Back then, all the parishioners, young and old, were burning with fervor, saying the Rosary, attending Mass, and doing good deeds, longing every day for the Lord's return.

Both my father and uncle passed away in the early 90s and I took on the role of deacon. I guided the parishioners in saying the Rosary, in services, and I read Scriptures and delivered sermons. Then in the spring of 1999, our priest gave me a gospel leaflet from Hong Kong and told me to mobilize everyone immediately with the good news that the Lord's return was imminent. I convened everyone, and asked them to pray the Rosary three times a day. I explained to them the signs of the Lord's coming foretold in the Bible. I said, "Fellow faithful, the Lord is about to return very soon. The Lord Jesus said: '**And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty**' (Matthew 24:30). When the Lord comes a great sign will appear in the sky. We'll all see with our own eyes the Lord descending on a cloud, with brilliance and majesty, to take us up into heaven. Only a few

short months are left until the year 2000. We can't delay sharing the gospel with unbeliever friends, relatives, and acquaintances. Saving more souls will be a great credit for us in the Lord's eyes." Hearing this stirred everyone up, and they all started discussing how they needed to stop coveting worldly things and share the gospel more with friends and family. November came in no time at all, and I started noticing my wife seemed a little different from usual. She went to Sister Tian Xiao's house in our village to read Scripture every night after dinner, and she hadn't done vespers with me for quite a few days. I was quite confused, and I wondered if she'd converted to another denomination. One afternoon, my wife asked me, "We've been believers for many years now. Are you hoping for the Lord's return?" Without any hesitation, I said, "Do you even have to ask? Of course I am!" Then she said to me very earnestly, "I have good news for you. The Lord has incarnated again and returned, and He's opened the scroll mentioned in Revelation." I was pretty shocked. I raised my voice and said to her, "What on earth are you talking about? The Lord Jesus is definitely coming on the clouds when He returns. There's no way He's returning in the flesh!" Then my wife said, "You haven't even looked into it. How can you just blindly determine that He can't come back in the flesh? Over all our years of faith, haven't we been hoping to greet the Lord's return? By making this blind assumption based on your notions, you could miss your chance to be raptured. I think you should calm down and really investigate this." But nothing she said really got through to me. After this I was worried she'd been led astray, so I kept telling her about prophecies of the Lord's second coming, saying, "After the Lord Jesus was crucified and then resurrected, His glorious body went up into heaven on a cloud. When He returns, He'll appear in spirit form, coming on the clouds in all glory. How could He come back in the flesh? The Bible says: '**Behold, He comes**

with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him’ (Revelation 1:7). **‘And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty’** (Matthew 24:29–30). We can see here that when He returns the sun will darken and the moon will lose its light. The stars will fall from the sky and the Lord will come down on a cloud. But as of yet, none of these signs have appeared at all. How could you say He’s already come?” She then responded very calmly, “The Lord’s prophecies are all hidden mysteries. If we explain them with blind literalism, based on our notions and imaginings, we’re likely to misinterpret His words. Just think of the Pharisees. They went by the literal meaning of the Scriptures and their own notions, thinking the Messiah would be born in a royal palace and would assume power, but the Lord Jesus wasn’t born in a palace. He was born in a manger as the son of a carpenter, and moreover He wasn’t any kind of ruler. The Pharisees saw the Lord Jesus’ birth and work didn’t fit with their notions at all, so they absolutely refused to accept that He was the coming of the Messiah, and they condemned and resisted Him. We can’t make the same mistake as the Pharisees!” I got annoyed when she said that, thinking “In any case, I’m the church deacon and more educated than her, but she just refuses to listen to me, and is even saying I’m blindly misinterpreting the Lord’s prophecies.” My face darkened and I said to her in a harsh tone, “I’ve told you over and over, but you won’t listen. You’ve really been taken in! You have to stop going to those gatherings.” But she said resolutely, “I’ve already investigated clearly, and my faith is in the returned Lord. If you don’t believe, that’s your business, but don’t stand in

my way.” Hearing her say this annoyed and angered me. In an effort to save her, I called a couple other church deacons to try to dissuade her. One of the deacons said to her really confidently, “Catholicism is the only correct religion. When the Lord returns, all the other denominations will come back to Catholicism. This is the Union of Christendom. I’m sure you know about this, as we both come from a long line of Catholics.” But my wife retorted, “Is there any basis in the word of the Holy Spirit for all denominations coming back to the Catholic Church when the Lord returns? Did the Lord Jesus ever say that? Do members of the Protestant churches and Eastern Orthodox churches want to reunify with the Catholic Church? The Bible prophesied long ago: **‘And in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it’** (Isaiah 2:2). Here **‘mountains’** refers to the various denominations. When the Lord does the work of reunification, it isn’t Protestantism returning to Catholicism or vice versa, rather, it’s true believers from all denominations coming before God’s throne. By all beliefs becoming one in this way, the Lord’s righteousness will become evident and all people will be utterly convinced.” When I heard her saying this, it all felt so novel and enlightening to me. The deacons were left speechless, too, and one of them just said emphatically, “You’re just a parishioner—you think you know more than a priest? No matter what you say, in the end, all denominations will return to Catholicism. Those who turn their backs on Catholicism have betrayed God, they will not be saved, and their souls won’t go to heaven. You have been led astray. I advise you to go to confession immediately. It’s not too late to turn back.” She responded firmly, “I haven’t been led astray. I’ve heard the Holy Spirit’s words to the churches and I’m following the Lamb’s footsteps. I’ve accepted God’s new work. I’m staying on this path,

and no one can stand in my way.” I’d initially wanted those two deacons to dissuade her, but I’d never imagined that not only could they not convince her, but that they’d be left speechless by her retorts. After that, my wife’s faith grew even stronger. She said that at first she felt a little constrained by me and was hesitant, but when the deacons tried to disrupt her, she clearly saw that they didn’t understand the truth, they were really arrogant, and didn’t want to humbly seek. She no longer felt constrained and kept attending gatherings every single day.

I thought to myself: “She isn’t very educated, and doesn’t know the Bible very well, so how could those two deacons be so dumbfounded by her arguments? What sorts of sermons is she listening to that are so incredible?” I was long puzzled by my wife’s transformation. I thought carefully over what she’d said, and felt there was something to it. Could it be that what she believed in really came from the Holy Spirit? I figured that wasn’t possible. If it did come from the Lord, then our priests should know all about it, so why hadn’t I heard them mention it? I went to talk to my brother-in-law about it. He was a church deacon, too. But to my surprise, as soon as I had finished saying what I had to say, he said angrily, “The Lord cannot possibly return in the flesh! There’s a church called Eastern Lightning that has emerged. They say the Lord has returned in the flesh and that He’s called Almighty God. Their teachings are really elevated and they’ve stolen away lots of ardent believers. Over a dozen just from our church alone have been misled, and even one priest. They won’t come back no matter what we say. Don’t listen to what they preach, no matter what.” Listening to my brother-in-law, I realized my wife had been listening to Eastern Lightning’s sermons. From my brother-in-law’s place, I went straight to another deacon’s house and told him to tell the other parishioners to stay far away from Eastern Lightning. At the same time I started to become even more

curious and I had this kind of defiant feeling about it. I wondered, “What exactly does Eastern Lightning have to say? Why have so many believers gone over to them? How could they mislead even priests? No matter how good their sermons are, could they really surpass our Catholic truths? If I have the chance, I want to see what they are actually preaching.”

I started reading the Bible more so I’d be more equipped to refute anyone from Eastern Lightning. I searched for prophecies related to the Lord’s return and read them over and over again. I read that the Lord Jesus said: **“My sheep hear My voice: and I know them, and they follow Me”** (John 10:27). While reading the words of the Lord I thought: “That’s right, the sheep of the Lord will hear His voice. So many ardent believers have accepted Eastern Lightning after hearing what they preached, and refuse to turn back. That is quite telling! They are all long-time Catholics with insight and a strong foundation in the faith. They must have investigated before accepting Eastern Lightning. Could it be that the book they read does contain the truth, that it is the voice of God? And if I don’t check it out, how would I know if what they preach really does come from God or not? I’ll see what it’s all about first, and then if there is truth in it and it accords with the Bible, I’ll keep on investigating. If it does not accord with the Catholic faith, I can still reject it.”

Then one morning right after breakfast, I found that my wife had gone out again. I knew she had gone to Tian Xiao’s house again. I thought to myself, “These sermons must be really enticing if she’s going to gatherings every day! I want to see what exactly they are saying.” When I got to Tian Xiao’s house, I not only saw a few other parishioners, but also Brother Wang Mingyi. He invited me to join the gathering. I sat down to listen and silently prayed to the Lord, asking Him to watch over my heart, to grant me discernment so I wouldn’t be misled. Mingyi said, “The Bible contains

three parts: the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Revelation. Each part records God's work of a different age. The Old Testament records His work in the Age of Law, when God issued the Ten Commandments through Moses plus His laws and decrees so that people would know what sin is and how to live on earth. The New Testament records His work in the Age of Grace, when the Lord Jesus was crucified as an eternal sin offering for mankind, redeeming people from sin, preventing them from being condemned and punished under the law for their sins. Revelation prophesied God's work in the last days, the work of the Age of Kingdom, when God becomes flesh and comes in secret, expressing truths to judge and cleanse mankind, to fully free us from the bonds of sin. This is an enormous salvation for all seekers of the truth." He also said, "In fact, God prophesied He'd come incarnate in the last days long ago. There are many prophecies of this in the Bible. The Lord said: **'Be you then also ready: for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come'** (Luke 12:40), and there's the prophecy in Revelation: **'Behold, I come as a thief'** (Revelation 16:15). Here, **'you think not'** and **'as a thief,'** are about **'the Son of man'** coming in secret when people aren't expecting it. **'The Son of man'** refers to God's incarnation. Just like the Lord Jesus—God incarnate of the last days was born of man, born into a family of common people. He looks just like a regular person, but He has the Holy Spirit within, and His essence is divine. He is the incarnation of God Himself. If it is the Spirit of God He cannot be called the Son of man, just like Jehovah God cannot be called the Son of man since He is the Spirit." Hearing Mingyi keep testifying that God had come back in the flesh was kind of irritating for me, and I didn't want to hear anymore. I stood up and refuted him, saying, "I can't accept what you're saying about the Lord Jesus returning in the flesh. The Bible prophesies: **'You men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This**

Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, as you have seen Him going into heaven' (Acts 1:11). The priests often tell us that the Lord went up into heaven on a cloud in spirit form, so when He returns, it should be in spirit form, coming down on a cloud in all glory. The Lord Jesus was nailed to the cross for us, taking on unimaginable suffering. He's not going to return in the flesh." In response, Mingyi calmly encouraged me, "Brother, let's sit down and fellowship more on this. The words of God are the truth and can resolve all our doubts." I had behaved impudently toward Mingyi, but he was still patiently trying to advise me, so to not embarrass him, I had no choice but to sit down. But I was still afraid of being misled, and I thought to myself, "Mingyi speaks well, I can't outdo him with my knowledge of the Bible. If I carry on listening and can't tell if I'm being misled, what should I do? I'm afraid I won't be saved and enter the kingdom of heaven. That can't happen. I can't listen to him anymore. I have to go home and really pore over the Bible first." So, I found an excuse and left.

After going home, I thought about the idea of the Lord returning in the flesh, and I was totally racked with turmoil. "Maybe my wife could be led astray, but misleading all those other devoted believers just didn't seem possible! If the Lord really has returned in the flesh and I don't look into it, I could lose my chance to welcome the Lord. But if Eastern Lightning isn't the true way and I end up on the wrong path, that would be a betrayal of the Lord and my soul couldn't be saved." For a while, I didn't know what I should do, my food lost its taste, and I spent sleepless nights tossing and turning. In my misery I knelt before an image of the Sacred Heart and prayed, "Lord Jesus, I don't know if Eastern Lightning really is Your return or not. Please give me discernment and don't let me lose my way and take the wrong path. God, please guide Your child."

After that, I started reading through all sorts of verses about the Lord's return, and with the Holy Spirit's guidance, I found some prophecies about the Lord coming in secret, and discovered a mystery. I realized that lots of verses mention that those who welcome the Lord's secret coming will attend the feast with Him, and that they will be blessed. For example, **"And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom comes, go you forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ... the bridegroom came; and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut"** (Matthew 25:6–7, 10). **"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame"** (Revelation 16:15). **"And you yourselves like to men who wait for their lord, when he shall return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he comes, shall find watching. Amen I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister unto them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants"** (Luke 12:36–38). **"Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock. If any man shall hear My voice, and open to Me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me"** (Revelation 3:20). I pondered and prayed over these verses over and over. I saw these words, **"at midnight there was a cry made," "as a thief," "come in the second watch,"** and **"come in the third watch,"** were all about the Lord coming down in secret when people weren't aware of it. What those people were saying about the Lord coming down in secret to save mankind really was in accordance with the Bible and the Lord's word! If I could welcome the Lord's secret coming, wouldn't I become one of the blessed? It was the Holy Spirit's enlightenment that allowed me to discover

this mystery of the Lord's coming. My heart was filled with gratitude beyond words for the Lord. I kept searching through the Bible. This is said by the Lord Jesus: **"For as the lightning that lightens from under heaven, shines unto the parts that are under heaven, so shall the Son of man be in His day. But first He must suffer many things, and be rejected by this generation"** (Luke 17:24-25). Before, I'd believed the Lord Jesus would return in spirit form, but the Lord clearly said: **"First He must suffer many things, and be rejected by this generation."** If the Lord returned in spirit form, people would tremble in fear at the sight of Him and would fall to the ground, in which case, how could He suffer or be rejected by people? Only God's incarnation as the Son of man would suffer and be rejected. Could it be that Eastern Lightning's testimony was right, and that the Lord had become flesh and returned as the Son of man? But then I remembered Revelation 1:7 that says: **"Behold, He comes with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of Him."** According to this verse, the Lord will return gloriously on the clouds to take us up, and everyone will see Him. If the Lord came down in the flesh in secret, how could that Bible verse be explained? Aren't the prophecies of coming in secret and of coming on the clouds contradictory? I couldn't make heads or tails of it.

In the blink of an eye, the New Year's Day for the year 2000 arrived, but my cherished hope of the Lord coming down on a cloud didn't come to fruition. I knew the signs of the Lord's return had all basically been fulfilled. I started to question the idea of the Lord coming back down on a cloud before the new millennium. In my heart, I was leaning toward the idea of a secret coming more and more. I kept searching for prophecies about it. I also prayed to the Lord Jesus, "Lord, the millennium has come,

but I haven't seen You come down on a cloud. I'm disappointed and in pain. Now only Eastern Lightning bears witness that You've returned. Lord Jesus, have You really come back? Please enlighten me so that I can recognize Your work." At this time I really wanted to hear more of Mingyi's fellowship because I was thinking that if Eastern Lightning truly is the Lord's return, I'd be cast out through God's work if I didn't accept it. The more I thought about it, the more anxious I felt. There was a day in January I really just couldn't sit still. I told my wife I wanted to hear what Mingyi had to say. After meeting up with him, I told him, "Lately I've been at home reading so many passages of Scripture and I feel like what you said fits with the prophecies. Now I can accept the idea of the Lord coming in secret as the Son of man, but there's also this prophecy: **'Behold, He comes with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of Him'** (Revelation 1:7). This says the Lord will come on the clouds in great glory. Doesn't that contradict the Lord coming secretly? The Lord is faithful, and there's no doubt His words will all be fulfilled. There must be some mystery within this."

He read me a couple passages of Almighty God's words, patiently fellowshiped with me, and I came to understand the mystery.

Almighty God says: **"Everyone in the universe who knows of the salvation of Jesus the Savior has been desperately yearning for Jesus Christ to suddenly arrive to fulfill what Jesus said while on earth: 'I shall arrive just as I departed.' Man believes that, following the crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus went back to heaven upon a white cloud to take His place at the Most High's right hand. In like manner, Jesus shall descend again upon a white cloud (this cloud refers to the cloud that Jesus rode upon when He returned to heaven), among those**

who have desperately yearned for Him for thousands of years, and He shall bear the image and wear the clothing of the Jews. After appearing to man, He shall bestow food upon them, and cause living water to gush forth for them, and shall live among man, full of grace and full of love, vivid and real. All such notions are what people believe. Yet Jesus the Savior did not do this; He did the opposite of what man conceived. He did not arrive among those who had yearned for His return, and He did not appear to all people while riding upon the white cloud. He has already arrived, but man does not know, and remains ignorant. Man is merely awaiting Him aimlessly, unaware that He has already descended upon a ‘white cloud’ (the cloud which is His Spirit, His words, His entire disposition and all that He is), and is now among a group of overcomers that He will make during the last days” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Savior Has Already Returned Upon a “White Cloud”).

“Many people may not care what I say, but I still want to tell every so-called saint who follows Jesus that, when you see Jesus descend from the heaven upon a white cloud with your own eyes, this will be the public appearance of the Sun of righteousness. Perhaps that will be a time of great excitement for you, yet you should know that the time when you witness Jesus descend from the heaven is also the time when you go down to hell to be punished. That will be the time of the end of God’s management plan and it will be when God rewards the good and punishes the wicked. For the judgment of God will have ended before man sees signs, when there is only the expression of truth. Those who accept the truth and do not seek signs, and thus have been purified, shall have returned before the throne of God and entered the Creator’s embrace. Only those who persist in the belief that ‘The Jesus who does not ride upon a white cloud is a false Christ’ shall be subjected to

everlasting punishment, for they only believe in the Jesus who exhibits signs, but do not acknowledge the Jesus who proclaims severe judgment and releases the true way and life. And so it can only be that Jesus deals with them when He openly returns upon a white cloud. They are too stubborn, too confident in themselves, too arrogant. How could such degenerates be rewarded by Jesus? The return of Jesus is a great salvation for those who are capable of accepting the truth, but for those who are unable to accept the truth it is a sign of condemnation. You should choose your own path, and should not blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and reject the truth. You should not be an ignorant and arrogant person, but someone who obeys the guidance of the Holy Spirit and longs for and seeks the truth; only in this way will you benefit” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew).

After reading God’s words, Mingyi fellowshiped, “There are two stages to God’s return in the last days. First, He incarnates as the Son of man and comes in secret. He expresses truths and does the work of judgment and cleansing, ultimately making a group of people into overcomers. Then the work of God’s secret incarnation will be concluded. He will then rain down the great disasters, rewarding good and punishing evil. Once the great disasters end, God will come down on a cloud, appearing to all peoples of all nations. This completely fulfills the Lord’s prophecy: **‘And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty’** (Matthew 24:30). In human minds, the Lord coming down on a cloud should be a time of great jubilation for the people of all nations, so why did He say there’d be cries of anguish? It’s because they’ll see that Almighty God, who

they resisted, is actually the returned Lord Jesus. But by then, God's work to save mankind will already be done. Since they kept refusing to accept anything other than 'the Lord Jesus coming on a white cloud,' they missed their chance to welcome the Lord and be saved. All they will be able to do is weep and gnash their teeth, and be punished. We can see that God incarnate returning in secret to work isn't just for man's salvation, but is also to expose and to cast people out. The sheep of God hear His voice, and all those who hear His voice and accept Him during the time when He works secretly in the flesh come before God's throne. These people are the sheep of God, they are wise virgins, and read God's word every day, they will be judged before the seat of Christ. Those who can rid themselves of corruption and be cleansed through God's judgment and chastisement will receive protection through the disasters and survive. But the wicked and the forces of evil who don't listen to the voice of God and resist God will be exposed and cast out through the work of God's incarnation and ultimately punished in the great disasters. God's work in secret separates the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares, the wise virgins from the foolish virgins, the true believers from the false ones, the servants of good from the servants of evil—all this is revealed. All will be unwittingly sorted according to their kind. This is the wisdom of God's work!" Hearing this fellowship from him really opened my eyes all of a sudden. I saw this is how the biblical prophecies about the Lord's return will be fulfilled, and I could see God's authority within Almighty God's words. That sense of God's unoffendable righteousness left me trembling with fear. I knew if I clung to the notion of the Lord returning on the clouds and didn't accept the truths expressed by God incarnate, I'd lose my chance at salvation! Inwardly I rejoiced at how lucky I was to have taken the initiative to seek the true way, saving me from being abandoned and cast out by the Lord.

That day I learned something about the mystery of the Lord's return from reading just a few passages of Almighty God's words. No wonder so many believers refused to come back after accepting Almighty God.

I was eager to clear up more of my confusion, so I continued to ask Mingyi more questions. I said, "The Lord Jesus appeared to His disciples for 40 days after His resurrection, and then He ascended into the sky in His resurrected spiritual body. We've always thought that when the Lord returns to judge the world in the last days, He'll appear in spirit form, seated at a great white throne, majestic and awe-inspiring, judging all peoples, so those with great sin go to hell, while those who have done good work go to heaven. But you bear witness that the Lord comes in the flesh to carry out His judgment work in the last days. Is there a biblical basis for this?" He said, "There are biblical prophecies about God becoming flesh as the Son of man in the last days to perform the work of judgment. For example, **'For as lightning comes out of the east, and appears even into the west: so shall the coming of the Son of man be'** (Matthew 24:27). **'Neither does the Father judge any man, but has given all judgment to the Son'** (John 5:22). **'And He has given Him power to do judgment, because He is the Son of man'** (John 5:27). **'He that despises Me, and receives not My words, has one that judges him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day'** (John 12:48). **'I have yet many things to say to you: but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth'** (John 16:12-13). **'For the time is, that judgment should begin at the house of God'** (1 Peter 4:17). These mentions of **'the Son,'** and **'the Son of man'** all refer to God in His incarnate form. In the last days, God's Spirit becomes flesh as the Son of man and proclaims truths to do His judgment work, and this is judgment beginning with the house of God. That is to say, Christ of the last days expresses truths and

carries out judgment among those who accept His judgment work, to cleanse and save them, leading them to enter into all truths. This is the work God incarnate performs in secret. As for all those who resist God, He will directly condemn and destroy them, using the disasters to deal with them. Christ of the last days, Almighty God, expresses all truths that cleanse and save man, doing the work of judgment beginning with God's house. This completely fulfills the prophecies of the Lord's return in the last days." I became even more enlightened upon hearing this. After that, Mingyi read a few more passages of the word of Almighty God and fellowshiped with me about why God doesn't do His judgment work in the last days in spirit form, but carries it out personally in the flesh.

Almighty God says: **"God's saving of man is not done directly using the method of the Spirit and the identity of the Spirit, for His Spirit can neither be touched nor seen by man, neither can man draw near. If He tried to save man directly using the perspective of the Spirit, man would be unable to receive His salvation. If God did not put on the outward form of a created man, there would be no way for man to receive this salvation. For man has no way of approaching Him, much as no one was able to go near the cloud of Jehovah. Only by becoming a created human being, that is, only by putting His word into the body of flesh that He is about to become, can He personally work the word into all who follow Him. Only then can man personally see and hear His word, and moreover enter into possession of His word, and by this means come to be fully saved. If God did not become flesh, no one of flesh and blood would be able to receive such great salvation, nor would a single person be saved. If the Spirit of God worked directly in the midst of mankind, all humanity would be struck down, or else, with no way of coming into touch with God, they would be completely**

carried away captive by Satan. The first incarnation was to redeem man from sin, to redeem him by means of the fleshly body of Jesus, that is, He saved man from the cross, but the corrupt satanic disposition still remained within man. The second incarnation is no longer to serve as a sin offering but rather to save fully those who were redeemed from sin. This is done so that those who have been forgiven may be delivered from their sins and made fully clean, and by attaining a changed disposition, break free of Satan's influence of darkness and return before the throne of God. Only in this way can man be fully sanctified"

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Mystery of the Incarnation (4)).

"If the Spirit of God spoke directly to man, mankind would all submit to the voice, falling down without words of revelation, much in the way that Paul fell to the ground in the light on the road to Damascus. If God continued to work in this way, man would never be able to come to know his own corruption through the judgment of the word and thereby attain salvation. Only through becoming flesh can God personally deliver His words into the ears of each and every human being, so that all who have ears may hear His words and receive His work of judgment by the word. Only this is the result achieved by His word, rather than the Spirit becoming manifest to frighten man into submission. It is only through this practical and yet extraordinary work that the old disposition of man, hidden deep within for many years, can be fully exposed, so that man may recognize it and have it changed. These things are all the practical work of God incarnate, in which, speaking and executing judgment in a practical manner, He achieves the results of judgment upon man by the word. This is the authority of God incarnate and the significance of God's incarnation"

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Mystery of the Incarnation (4)).

Then he fellowshiped with me, “We can see from God’s words that the first time God became flesh, He was crucified as a sin offering to take on man’s sins, so once we believe in the Lord our sins are forgiven. But the root of our sin, our sinful nature is still within us. We’re constantly sinning and revealing corrupt dispositions such as arrogance, deviousness, and evil. We lie and cheat, we’re jealous, and we’re hateful. In the face of disaster, or when there’s hardship in our family, we tend to blame and judge God, and even deny Him. That’s an undeniable fact. God is holy, so anyone who is impure cannot behold Him. We’re so filthy and corrupt, and we sin and resist God, so how could we be worthy of entering God’s kingdom? When the Lord Jesus returns in the last days, He expresses truths and does the work of judgment to cleanse and transform man so that people can fully cast off their sin and corruption, be saved by God, and enter God’s kingdom. His judgment in the last days is to purify and save mankind. Therefore doing His work in the flesh is most appropriate. If God’s Spirit judged people, they wouldn’t be cleansed or saved. That’s because people are mortal, of the flesh, and we’ve all been corrupted by Satan, so we’re full of satanic dispositions, filth, and corruption. We could never be near God’s Spirit. If His Spirit directly judged us, we’d just be obliterated because of our rebellion and defiance. God’s Spirit speaking directly to man would be like thunder and lightning. Not only would we not understand, but it would terrify us. That kind of judgment work of mankind wouldn’t achieve the desired aims. I’ll give you an example. Imagine a little bird is injured and we want to help it out, but it’s afraid of us and won’t let us approach it, because it’s totally different from us, and it can’t understand what we say and it doesn’t understand our intentions. But if we turned into a little bird, and then approached to help, it wouldn’t be afraid or resist us. In the same way, in order to better save us, such deeply corrupted humans, God

becomes flesh and puts on the outer shell of a regular person. He expresses truths, speaks in a language that can be understood by humans, and exposes our corruption and rebelliousness, as well as our sinful nature of opposing God, displaying His righteous disposition to us, so that we can see God is very real. Then He can also very clearly share with us His will and demands, and the truths people should practice and enter into, showing us the path to change our dispositions and be cleansed. God doing His work in the flesh can better reveal our notions and rebelliousness. The first time God incarnated and came to work, the Pharisees knew very well that the work and words of the Lord Jesus were authoritative and powerful, but they saw He didn't look like a great man, that He was the son of a carpenter, and that what He said and did didn't fit with their notions and imaginings, so they refused to even look into it, and just resisted and condemned Him, and kept others from investigating God's work. Ultimately, they had the Lord Jesus crucified. In the last days, God has incarnated again to perform His work of judgment, and because God becoming flesh to speak and do His work isn't in line with people's notions, we delimit God out of our arrogance, judging Him, and resisting His work. The clergy of the religious world in particular, are madly resisting, condemning, and blaspheming God. If God didn't incarnate to do this work, but His Spirit came to do the work of judgment, who would dare be so flippant toward Him? Could that reveal people's corruption? It's only God in the flesh that can reveal all our rebelliousness, corruption, and notions about God. Those who love the truth can recognize their corrupt dispositions and satanic natures of defiance and rebelliousness against God through His judgment and revelations. They are able to repent and despise themselves, and ultimately they're conquered and cleansed through His words, and led by God into His kingdom. But those who cling to their notions and imaginings, denying and resisting God, who

refuse to accept the truth, but insist on fighting God, will be revealed by God to be the tares. They are the servants of evil and the antichrists revealed by God's work in the last days. Not only will they not be saved, but they will be cursed and punished by God, just like the Pharisees. So, God incarnate coming to do His judgment work in the last days is most useful for saving corrupt mankind."

Mingyi's fellowship was really enlightening for me. I thought of the Age of Law. When Jehovah God appeared and spoke to the Israelites on Mount Sinai, they all heard God's voice as if it were thunder and they were filled with fear. They said to Moses, "Speak you to us, and we will hear: let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die" (Exodus 20:19). God is holy, and we're corrupt humans. We really can't have direct contact with God's Spirit. I also thought back on when I first heard the news that the Lord has returned in the flesh. I was filled with notions and resistance, and I was insufferably arrogant. Without seeking or looking into it, I just blindly determined and judged that the Lord couldn't possibly return in the flesh. I sealed off the church, kept others from investigating the true way, and tried to stop my wife from attending gatherings. How were my actions any different from the Pharisees', when they resisted the Lord Jesus? I had been so arrogant and rebellious. If God's Spirit did the work of judgment, I would have already been obliterated, then how would I have had a chance to gain God's salvation? God incarnate performing the work of judgment really is His salvation for man! God incarnate carrying out His work in the last days is absolutely necessary!

Mingyi fellowshipped with me a few more times after that and I read a lot of Almighty God's words. From His words, I learned the inside story and meaning behind God's three stages of work to save mankind, the mysteries of God's incarnations, the mysteries of His names, the inside truth

of the Bible, how to hear His voice, how to discern the true Christ from false ones, what kinds of people God saves, what kinds of people He casts out, and more. The more I read Almighty God's words, the better I understood His work and His will. I understood so many mysteries of the Bible that I hadn't understood before, so many things became clear that I'd never grasped before. It was so nourishing for me. I felt sure in my heart that the words of Almighty God are the truth, the voice of God, and that Almighty God is the one and only true God appeared! This is because only God can proclaim truths, reveal mysteries, and provide us with endless truth and life. Almighty God is truly the Lord returned! I used to stick with the literal words of the Bible, and I delineated God based on my notions and imaginings. I didn't look into God's new work, but stubbornly rejected the returned God. I nearly became a God-resisting Pharisee, missing my chance to welcome the returned Lord and enter into heaven. If the Holy Spirit hadn't guided and saved me in time, I would have certainly been ruined by my notions. It's all thanks to God's mercy and salvation that I could welcome His return and attend His wedding banquet. Thank Almighty God!

52. Letting Go of My Domineering Ways

By Kylie, France

Last year, I was assigned to water newcomers. At first, I was managing two churches on my own. Later, for some reason, the leader arranged Sister Lillian and me to take charge of only one of the churches. Upon seeing such arrangement, I was a little upset. “I used to manage two churches on my own, now I’m just managing one, yet they give me a partner. Is that really necessary? Any accomplishments would definitely be seen as achieved by two people, and I wouldn’t be in the spotlight and no one would look up to me. If I handled it myself, then the brothers and sisters would see me as capable for taking on so much alone. They would definitely see me as being capable in that work, as being an indispensable backbone of that duty. That would be so admirable. Plus, with a partner, I couldn’t have final say, so wouldn’t I have half the power then? I’d have to get my partner’s opinion on everything, and I’d look inept.” Thinking that way made me really resistant to that arrangement and I wondered if the leader had made a mistake, or if she looked down on me. I knew all the other churches had two people in charge, but I felt like I was particularly capable, so I shouldn’t have been treated the same as the others. I was really brushing Lillian aside, and I didn’t even tell her about lots of things I did.

At one point, two groups needed to merge because there weren’t enough members in either group. I figured I could do something that simple on my own. I’d handled all that stuff on my own before, so there was no need for discussion with Lillian, and I went ahead and merged them. When Lillian inquired, I told her confidently that I’d taken care of it. Another time, the leader wanted us to see which of the newcomers could be cultivated to share the gospel, so I just directly formed a group of good

candidates. When they were learning the principles for gospel sharing, I noticed one of them tended to be busy with his job. Without discussing it with anyone else, I transferred him out of that group and didn't let him participate in sharing the gospel. When the brother who was in charge of gospel work found out, he dealt with me, saying I was being authoritarian and arbitrary, making decisions without involving my partner. At the time I just said he was right, but I didn't believe at heart that my corruption was that serious.

After things like that had happened many times, one day Lillian sought me out and said, "We're partners. Even if you can do things on your own, you should keep me in the loop so I also know how our work is progressing. Whenever something comes up with Reese, she always makes the effort to discuss things with her partner. They talk over everything together." I thought, "If I tell you, you'll just take my advice, so do we really need to go through that formality? Reese always asks because she doesn't know how to do something. Why bother when I can manage just fine? Having a partner is such a hassle, having to talk to you about everything. It will look like I'm a subordinate reporting to a superior, making me look inept." Later on, she mentioned this to me quite a few more times, but I kept doing things as before. Sometimes she'd ask me about specific things in our duties, but I snubbed her, thinking she was asking about things we'd just discussed. In our work discussions, sometimes I'd hear Lillian sighing over and over, and I wondered if she felt constrained by me. I did feel a little remorseful. But then I thought that I hadn't done anything to her, so I didn't take it seriously. One day she asked me if I could manage the church on my own. At the time I didn't realize why she'd asked me that, and wondered if she was going to be transferred out. I thought that would be great, that I wouldn't have to report things to

her, and I could be in charge. So, I simply replied that I could. Upon hearing that, Lillian didn't say a word. Later on, I learned that she did feel really held back by me, like she couldn't do anything, and she even wanted to resign. At that time, I just acknowledged that I didn't have a good attitude toward her, but I didn't self-reflect.

The leader had Lillian focus some of her efforts on another project, so I was responsible for more of the church's work. I was secretly pleased, thinking that now I could finally show off my skills and have full say. But things didn't turn out that way at all. My duty obviously got a lot harder, and when the brothers and sisters encountered problems in their duties, I couldn't see the essence of it, so I couldn't resolve it from the root. After a while, more and more newcomers weren't gathering regularly, and the leader told me that my work performance was the worst. Lillian also pointed out my problems many times, saying I was a lone wolf and didn't consult with others, and I didn't seek the truth in things. I was really obdurate at the time, and didn't take it in or reflect on myself. My state got worse and worse after that, and I was always muddleheaded. One day, the leader said she wanted to chat with me, and set up a meeting with another sister. I'd heard that sister's behavior was poor, so I interpreted that as meaning the leader believed I was just like her. When I thought this, I was quite frightened. Was my problem really that serious? Was I going to be dismissed? Everything was going fine when I had been managing two churches, and now with just one, doing work I was familiar with, that I'd done before, why wasn't I doing well? There had to be something wrong with me. I came before God in prayer, asking Him to guide me to reflect and understand my issue.

Then one day, I read this passage of God's words: **"When two people are responsible for something, and one of them has the essence of an**

antichrist, what is exhibited in this person? No matter what it is, they and they alone are the one who gets the ball rolling, who asks the questions, who sorts things out, and who comes up with a solution. And most of the time, they keep their partner completely in the dark. What is their partner in their eyes? Not their deputy, but simply window dressing. In the antichrist's eyes, partners simply aren't partners. Whenever there is a problem, the antichrist thinks it over, and once they have decided on a course of action, they inform everyone else that this is how it is to be done, and no one is allowed to question it. What is the essence of their cooperation with others? Fundamentally it is to have the final say, never discussing problems with anyone else, taking sole responsibility for the work, and turning their partners into window dressing. They always act alone and never cooperate with anyone. They never discuss or communicate about their work with anyone else, they often make decisions alone and deal with issues alone, and in many things, other people find out how things were finished or handled only after the deed is done. Other people tell them, 'All problems have to be discussed with us. When did you deal with that person? How did you handle him? How did we not know about it?' They neither provide an explanation nor pay any attention; to them, their partners have no use at all, and are just decoration or window dressing. When something happens, they think it over, make up their own mind, and act as they see fit. No matter how many people there are around them, it's as if these people are not there. To the antichrist, they may as well be air. Given this, does anything real come from their partnership with others? Not at all, they are just going through the motions and acting a part. Others say to them, 'Why don't you fellowship with everyone else when you come across a problem?' They reply, 'What do they know?

I'm the team leader, it's up to me to decide.' The others say, 'And why didn't you fellowship with your partner?' They reply, 'I told him, he had no opinion.' They use other people having no opinion or not being able to think for themselves as excuses to obfuscate the fact that they are acting as a law unto themselves. And this is not followed by the slightest introspection. It would be impossible for this kind of person to accept the truth. This is a problem with the antichrist's nature" (The

Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). God's words described my state perfectly. Every word felt like God was directly exposing me. I finally saw that always wanting final say in everything, treating Lillian like she didn't exist, and not consulting with her with the excuse that I could do it, was being dictatorial and taking an antichrist's path. In retrospect, I'd been doing my duty that way all along. When it came time to merge the two groups, I did it without discussing things with Lillian, nor did I even give her a heads up. When I saw a newcomer was busy with his job, I didn't discuss the best course of action with her, but just kicked him out of the group and took away his duty. When Lillian asked about the progress of some projects and new believers, instead of responding patiently, I got annoyed and resistant, thinking it was like reporting to a superior, as if I were below her, so I was dismissive of her. I always wanted final say, I wanted to have authority. I was authoritarian and arbitrary in my duty, not wanting to work with anyone, and I held Lillian back. How was that doing my duty? It was disrupting the church's work and acting as a minion of Satan!

Later on, I came across another passage of God's words: **"Although leaders and workers have partners, and everyone who performs any duty has a partner, antichrists believe they have good caliber and are better than ordinary people, so ordinary people are not worthy of being**

their partner, and are all inferior to them. This is why antichrists like to call the shots and don't like to discuss things with anyone else. They think doing so makes them look stupid and incompetent. What kind of viewpoint is this? What kind of disposition is this? Is this an arrogant disposition? They think that to cooperate and discuss things with others, to ask them questions and seek answers from them, is undignified and demeaning, an affront to their self-respect. And so, in order to protect their self-respect, they don't allow transparency in anything they do, nor do they tell others about it, much less discuss it with them. They think that to discuss with others is to show themselves as incompetent; that to always solicit other people's opinions means they are stupid and incapable of thinking for themselves; that working with others in completing a task or sorting out some problem makes them appear useless. Isn't this their arrogant and absurd mentality? Isn't this their corrupt disposition? The arrogance and self-righteousness within them is too obvious; they have lost all normal human reason, and they aren't quite right in the head. They always think they have abilities, can finish things by themselves, and have no need to coordinate with others. Since they have such corrupt dispositions, they are unable to achieve harmonious cooperation. They believe that to work with others is to dilute and fragment their power, that when work is shared with others, their own power is lessened and they can't decide everything for themselves, meaning they lack real power, which for them is a tremendous loss. And so, no matter what happens to them, if they believe they understand and they know how to handle it, they won't discuss it with anyone else, they will want to keep control over it. They will prefer to make mistakes over letting other people know, they will prefer to be wrong over sharing power with

someone else, and they will prefer dismissal over letting other people interfere in their work. This is an antichrist. They would rather harm the interests of God's house, would rather wager the interests of God's house, than share their power with anyone else. They think that when they're doing a piece of work or handling some matter, this isn't the performance of a duty, but rather a chance to display themselves and stand out from others, and a chance to exercise power. Therefore, although they say that they will harmoniously cooperate with others and that they will discuss matters together with others when they occur, the truth is, in the depths of their heart, they are unwilling to give up their power or status. They think that so long as they understand some doctrines and are capable of doing it themselves, they don't need to collaborate with anyone else; they think that it should be carried out and completed alone, and that only this makes them competent. Is this view correct? They don't know that if they violate principles, they aren't fulfilling their duties, so they aren't able to carry out God's commission, and are merely doing service. Rather than seek the truth principles when performing their duty, they exercise power according to their thoughts and intentions, show off, and parade themselves. No matter who their partner is or what they do, they never want to discuss things, they always want to act on their own, and they always want to have the final say. They are obviously playing with power and using power to do things. Antichrists all love power, and when they have status, they want more power. When they possess power, antichrists are liable to use their status to show off and parade themselves, to make others look up to them and to achieve their goal of standing out from the crowd. Thus do the antichrists fixate upon power and status, and will never relinquish it, ever" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They

Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). When I read this, I reflected that the reason I had been so domineering and unwilling to work with others was that I was worried if more people were involved in the church's work, my power would be dispersed and I wouldn't get to be the only one in charge, calling the shots, or gain others' admiration. I'd taken responsibility for church work before, and I thought I was experienced, had a good head for it, and was capable. I capitalized on this and became arrogant, thinking I was someone special and superior to others. Lillian wanted me to discuss things with her before doing anything, but I felt like doing so would make me look incompetent, so I'd just do things on my own. Occasionally I'd wonder if I should consult with her, but to show off and gain others' admiration, I came up with a reason, thinking she wouldn't have opinions to share, and even if I did discuss with her, she'd just agree with me anyway. I used this as an excuse not to work with Lillian. The church had arranged for the two of us to do the church's work together. She had the right to partake in every project, to know its details and progress, but I pushed her aside to do things on my own, taking away her right to know things and speak, making her just a figurehead. I kept all the work within my own hands without letting her participate. Wasn't the essence of my doing this the same as an antichrist setting up their own empire? I thought of the great red dragon's dictatorship and its ultimate control, that people have to listen to it without question. As for me, I wanted to be in charge in everything I did, domineering and unwilling to discuss things with others. I was dictatorial in the church and had final control. How was I any different from the great red dragon? The more I thought about it the more I realized how serious my problem of refusing to cooperate with others was, and I felt kind of afraid. Christ and the truth hold power in the church. No matter what happens, we should seek the truth and do things according to

principle. But I always wanted to have the final say in the church I managed. Didn't I just want to be king of the hill? I wasn't considering how to practice the truth and protect the interests of the church, instead I just considered whether my personal desires would be satisfied. In the end the church's work became a total mess because of me, and I was just disrupting and standing in the way. It was God's grace that I could do that duty. God's will was that I'd really pursue the truth, work well with the brothers and sisters and water new believers properly so they could quickly find a foothold on the true way. But I took it as a chance to show off, exercise my power, and get others to look up to me. I was always imperious, showing off my skills. This not only stood in the way of the church's work, it also hurt the brothers and sisters and brought harm to my own life.

I saw a video reading of God's words that turned my mistaken views around. Almighty God says: **"Harmonious cooperation involves many things. At the very least, one of these many things is to allow others to speak and make different suggestions. If you are genuinely reasonable, no matter what kind of work you do, you must first learn to seek the truth principles, and you should also take the initiative to seek the opinions of others. As long as you take every suggestion seriously, and then work together to resolve problems, you will essentially achieve harmonious cooperation. This way, you will encounter far fewer difficulties in your duty. No matter what problems come up, it will be easy to solve and deal with them. This is the effect of harmonious cooperation. Sometimes there are disputes over trivial matters, but as long as these don't affect the work, they will not be a problem. However, on key matters and major matters involving the work of the church, you must reach a consensus and seek truth to resolve them. As a leader or a worker, if you always think yourself above others, and**

revel in your duty like some government official, always indulging in the trappings of your station, always making your own plans, always considering and enjoying your own fame and status, always running your own operation, and always seeking to gain higher status, to manage and control more people, and to expand the scope of your power, this is trouble. It is dangerous to treat an important duty as a chance to enjoy your position as if you are a government official. If you always act like this, not wishing to work with others, not wanting to dilute your power and share it with anyone else, not wanting anyone else to have the upper hand, to steal the limelight, if you only want to enjoy the power on your own, then you are an antichrist. But if you often seek the truth, put aside the flesh, forsake your own motivations and designs, and are able to take it upon yourself to work with others, open up your heart to consult and seek with others, attentively listen to others' ideas and suggestions, and accept advice which is correct and in line with the truth, no matter who it comes from, then you are practicing in a wise and correct manner, and you are able to avoid taking the wrong path, which is protection for you. You must let go of leadership titles, let go of the filthy air of status, treat yourself as an ordinary person, stand on the same level as others, and have a responsible attitude toward your duty. If you always treat your duty as an official title and status, or as a kind of laurel, and imagine that others are there to serve your position, this is troublesome, and God will despise and be disgusted with you. If you believe that you are equal to others, you just have a little more of a commission and responsibility from God, if you can learn to put yourself on an even footing with them, and can even stoop to asking what other people think, and if you can earnestly, closely, and attentively listen to what they say, then you

will work in harmony with others. What effect will this harmonious cooperation achieve? The effect is huge. You will gain things you never had before, which are the light of truth and the realities of life; you will discover others' virtues and learn from their strengths. There's something else: You conceive of other people as stupid, dim-witted, foolish, inferior to you, but when you listen to their opinions, or other people open up to you, you will unwittingly discover that no one is quite as ordinary as you think, that everyone can offer up different thoughts and ideas, and that everyone has things to teach you. If you learn to harmoniously cooperate, beyond just helping you learn from the strengths of others, it can reveal your arrogance and self-righteousness, and avoid you imagining you are clever. When you no longer consider yourself smarter and better than everyone else, you will cease to live in this narcissistic and self-appreciative state. And that will protect you, will it not? Such is the lesson you should learn from and the benefit of working with others" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)).

When I saw this, I realized that the reason I didn't want to cooperate with Lillian—and why I was afraid to divide my power—was that I didn't see the duty God gave me as my responsibility. Instead, I took it as my official post, as if it were my position and crown. I refused to cooperate with others, and was always high and mighty, wanting to stand out on my own. That was the wrong path. Actually, what that period of time revealed was that I had a shallow understanding of the truth and approach to problems. I also wasn't considering our work in a holistic way, and did hardly any practical work. Helping the brothers and sisters with their problems in life entry was a struggle, and there was plenty of work I couldn't do on my own. I needed someone else there to work with, discuss things with, and get feedback

from, to learn from their strengths to bolster my own weaknesses. I thought of God incarnate expressing so many truths for mankind's salvation, but He doesn't exhibit the slightest arrogance. He listens to people's suggestions in lots of things and never shows off. He's always quietly expressing truths to water and sustain humankind. God's essence is so kind and lovely. But I had been corrupted by Satan, full of satanic dispositions, and didn't understand the truth. There was a lot I couldn't understand. Yet even so I was still high and mighty, thinking I was something special, that I could take on a big pile of work on my own without a partner, having no regard for anyone else at all. I was incredibly arrogant and irrational. In fact, discussing things and fellowshiping more in our duty is reasonable and wise, not a display of incompetence. It's gaining things from others that we can't see or understand, and avoiding the wrong path because of our conceit. This is the only way to do a duty well and gain God's protection. Now I understood God's will. Discussing things, being cooperative, and bolstering each other's weaknesses is the only way to do a duty well and please God.

Later, I came across another passage of God's words, which made me find the path to follow. God's words say: **"When you are cooperating with others to fulfill your duties, are you able to be open to differing opinions? Are you able to let others speak?"** (I am, a little. Before, a lot of the time I wouldn't listen to the suggestions of the brothers and sisters and would insist on doing things my own way. Only later, when the facts proved I was wrong, did I see that most of their suggestions had been correct, that it was the resolution that everyone discussed that was actually suitable, and that by relying on my own views I was unable to see things clearly and that I was lacking. After experiencing this, I realized how important harmonious cooperation is.) **And what can you see from this? After experiencing**

this, did you receive some benefit, and understand the truth? Do you think anyone is perfect? No matter how strong people are, or how capable and talented, they still are not perfect. People must recognize this, it is fact, and it is the attitude that people should have to correctly approach their own merits and strengths or faults; this is the rationality that people should possess. With such rationality, you can properly deal with your own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of others, and this will enable you to work alongside them harmoniously. If you have understood this aspect of the truth and can enter this aspect of the truth reality, then you can get along harmoniously with your brothers and sisters, drawing on their strong points to offset any weaknesses you have. In this way, no matter what duty you are performing or what you are doing, you will always get better at it and have God's blessing" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of

the Last Days. Part Three). It's true. No matter how great and capable you are, you are not a perfect person. Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses, and they should be approached properly. We have to learn to listen to others' suggestions and bolster each other. Only by having such good sense can we cooperate well with others. Previously, I'd just been paying attention to watering new believers, while Lillian took on the gospel work. If I'd taken charge of all that work, there's no way I could have managed it or done it well. And my perspective was limited in lots of things in my duty. I was rash. Whenever our leader asked me about my work, she pointed out many mistakes and things that weren't done quite right. I realized I really couldn't fulfill my duty well without a partner. I had never understood that before, and I didn't know myself. I was arrogant, always wanted to be in charge, and couldn't work with others. This held up the church's work. Realizing this, I felt incredibly guilty, so I silently prayed to God, saying I did not

want to live in corruption anymore, and was ready to work well with Lillian in my duty.

In our work together after that, I saw Lillian had many strengths. She was more considerate than I was and sought the truth principles when issues came up. She was detailed in her fellowship on the truth. I hadn't been a leader very long, so I just had a vague idea of how to manage the church's work. When it came to the details of how to do the work and how to fellowship on the truth to solve problems, I somewhat lacked clarity. I didn't match up to her in those ways. And she was more loving than me; when helping newcomers out, she'd fellowship over and over. When I thought she'd already done a great job, she'd say she needed to do better. I thought about how I hadn't been cooperating with her, but treated her as superfluous. She'd been negative at times, but she'd quickly turn her state around and keep doing her duty actively. Even though I'd been dismissive of her, she kept asking questions again and again. She was loving and patient, and took on genuine responsibility for her duty. All of these were qualities I lacked. I felt really terrible when I realized that. I saw how much my corrupt disposition had hurt Lillian and the church's work. If I'd been eager to cooperate with her from the very start, discussing everything with her, things wouldn't have turned out that way. I was full of regret, and came before God and prayed, "God, I can see my corruption and flaws, and now I understand Your will. I'm going to cooperate with Lillian from now on and live out a human likeness."

In my work with Lillian after that, I made sure to ask her things like, "Does this look okay to you? Do you have any other suggestions?" One time when we were discussing our work, she asked me how the watering of newcomers was going. I thought to myself, "We just talked about it a couple days ago, why go over it again? If there's any problem, I can handle

it.” I wanted to brush her off again. Then I realized my old problem was rearing its head again, that I wanted to be in charge. I said a prayer quickly, asking God to guide me so I wouldn’t act out of corrupt disposition. After my prayer I thought of all my failures along the way, how I was dictatorial and domineering, always wanting to do things my own way and show off. It was entirely an expression of Satan. I had to forsake myself and practice God’s words, and cooperate with her. So, I earnestly shared everything I knew about my work with her, and when I was done, Lillian shared her own thoughts. I learned some things from her fellowship and felt that it was a wonderful way to do a duty.

After that, when I encountered problems in my duty, I’d seek her out to discuss them, and we’d seek the truth and fellowship on these issues together. After a while of this, my state improved and my performance in my duty improved. I’m so grateful to God. And I’ve seen that only by letting go of myself in my duty, working well with others and making up for each other’s deficiencies can I receive God’s guidance.

53. My Bumpy Road of Spreading the Gospel

By Anna, Myanmar

I'm from Myanmar. I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days in 2019. I learned from reading God's words that God performs His judgment work in the last days to fully save man from Satan's influence, bringing us into a beautiful destination. I'm so grateful for God's salvation. Since then, I have been spreading the gospel in the church. At a gathering, we read a passage of God's words: **"My final work is not only for the sake of punishing man, but also for the sake of arranging the destination of man. Moreover, it is so that all people may acknowledge My deeds and actions. I want each and every person to see that all I have done is right, and that all I have done is an expression of My disposition. It is not man's doing, much less nature, that brought forth mankind, but I, who nourish every living being in creation. Without My existence, mankind will only perish and suffer the scourge of calamity. No human being will ever again see the beautiful sun and moon, or the verdant world; mankind shall encounter only the frigid night and the inexorable valley of the shadow of death. I am mankind's only salvation. I am mankind's only hope and, even more, I am He on whom the existence of all mankind rests. Without Me, mankind will immediately come to a standstill. Without Me, mankind will suffer catastrophe and be trampled underfoot by all manner of ghosts, though no one takes heed of Me. I have done work that can be done by no other, and hope only that man can repay Me with some good deeds. Though but a few have been able to repay Me, I will still conclude My journey in the human world and begin the next step of My unfolding work, because all My rushing to and fro in man's midst these many**

years has been fruitful, and I am very pleased. What I care about is not the number of people, but rather their good deeds. In any case, I hope that you prepare a sufficiency of good deeds for your own destination. Then will I be satisfied; otherwise, none of you can escape the disaster that will befall you. The disaster originates with Me and is of course orchestrated by Me. If you cannot appear as good in My eyes, then you will not escape suffering the disaster” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). I felt greatly encouraged through reading God’s words. Since disasters are growing and growing, and many people who long for God’s appearance haven’t heard His voice or accepted His last-days salvation, I was feeling anxious and had a sense of urgency. So I prayed, asking God to guide me to spread His last-days gospel to more people.

In early July 2022, I went with some brothers and sisters to a village to spread the gospel. A brother had been reported and arrested for preaching there, and the village chief told the residents they weren’t allowed to be religious every time he came back from a county government meeting. If any believers were discovered, they’d be fined a lot of money or even arrested. So, no one dared listen to what we were preaching. They wanted us to talk to the village chief first before they’d dare look into it. I was an outsider. Those who spread the gospel with me were all from neighboring villages and we didn’t know the chief. The locals wouldn’t take us to see him, either. I didn’t know how to resolve these difficulties, and we were in danger of being reported and arrested at any time. I said a prayer, asking God to show us the way. We read a passage of God’s words in a gathering: **“You must believe that everything is in God’s hands, and that people are just cooperating. If you are sincere, God will see, and He will open up a way out for you in every situation. No difficulty is**

insurmountable; you must have this faith. Therefore, when you fulfill your duties, there is no need to have any misgivings. As long as you give it your all, with all your heart, God will not give you difficulties, nor will He give you more than you can handle” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Believing in God, What Is Most Important Is to Practice and Experience His Words). God’s words gave me faith and strength. Whether I could meet the village chief, or was reported and arrested was all entirely in God’s hands. Expanding the gospel is God’s directive, something that God wants completed. Although the government oppressed it and the chief impeded it, they couldn’t stop the expansion of God’s kingdom gospel. They couldn’t stop God’s sheep from returning to Him. As long as we put all we had into our work, I knew God would show the way and open up a path for us. Once we understood God’s will, we all had the confidence to go share the gospel. It turned out that a brother from a nearby village was related to the chief. He said he’d take us to see the chief the following day. That evening we got back to the village and went to preach to some locals with good humanity. As we were fellowshiping, the village deputy chief, the platoon leader, and the treasurer showed up unexpectedly, then left after listening for a bit. A resident said, “They came to see if you guys were preaching the gospel. We shouldn’t listen anymore. First go talk to the village chief, and we’ll listen more if he agrees.” We had no choice but to leave. Back at home, I was feeling pretty down. The deputy chief knew we were sharing the gospel. If he got in the way, the villagers really wouldn’t look into the true way. Also, when that brother got arrested before, it was from being reported by the treasurer. Worried about being arrested myself, too, I didn’t want to go talk to the village chief. The supervisor found out about my state and fellowshiped with me, “Faced with that sort of situation, we can’t pull back. We have to use that chance to talk to the village chief and share the gospel

with them. As long as we fulfill our responsibilities, whether they accept the gospel or not, our conscience will be clear.” Right then, I thought of a passage of God’s words I’d read before: **“In spreading the gospel, people must fulfill their responsibility and deal with every potential gospel recipient earnestly. God saves man to the greatest extent possible, and people must be mindful of God’s will, they must not carelessly pass over anyone who is seeking and investigating the true way. ... As long as they are willing to investigate the true way and able to seek the truth, you should do all you can to read more of God’s words to them and fellowship more of the truth to them, and to testify to God’s work and resolve their notions and questions, so that you may win them over and bring them before God. This is in line with the principles of spreading the gospel. So, how can they be won over? If, in the process of engaging with them, you ascertain that this person is of good caliber and good humanity, you must do everything you can to fulfill your responsibility; you must pay a certain price, and use certain ways and means, and it doesn’t matter what ways and means you employ as long as you use them to win that person over. In sum, in order to win them over, you must fulfill your responsibility, and use love, and do everything within your power. You must fellowship on all the truths that you understand and do all the things you should do. Even if this person is not won over, you will be left with a clear conscience. You will have done all that you can”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). God’s words tell us that when preaching, we have to fulfill our responsibility to have a clear conscience. As long as the person being preached to fits the principles, we should share the gospel with them in any way possible. The villagers were interested in investigating the true way. It was only because of the

government's oppression that they were scared of being fined or arrested, and wouldn't listen. I should fulfill my responsibility and fellowship more on God's words, resolving their issues and struggles. If the village chief was a good person who was ready to listen to God's words, I should try everything to preach to him. That would be truly fulfilling my responsibility. But if I didn't share the gospel out of fear of being reported and arrested, then I would owe God. Once I understood God's will, I had the confidence to talk to the chief, and preach to the villagers.

The next day, that brother took us to the chief's home. The deputy chief and the treasurer were there, too. We fellowshiped on how God carries out His three stages of work to save mankind, and told them we're now in the last days, and that Almighty God is the coming of the Savior. He is expressing truths and doing the work of judgment to purify and save man. We have to accept His judgment and cleansing to be protected by God through the disasters, and enter His kingdom. The village chief was intrigued and wanted to investigate. Both the deputy chief and the treasurer had a bad attitude, though. They said, "We're listening to the government. They don't allow religious beliefs, so we can't believe. Otherwise, we'll be arrested." Seeing they were really firm in their stance, I prayed to God, entrusting them to God and asking Him to lead. Then, I read them a passage of Almighty God's words: **"Perhaps your country currently prospers, but if you allow your people to stray from God, then it shall find itself increasingly bereft of the blessings of God. The civilization of your country shall be increasingly trampled underfoot and, before long, the people shall rise up against God and curse Heaven. And so, unbeknownst to man, the fate of a country shall be ruined. God shall raise up powerful countries to deal with those countries that have been cursed by God, and may even wipe them from the face of the earth. The**

rise and fall of a country or nation is predicated upon whether its rulers worship God, and whether they lead their people to become closer to God and to worship Him” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 2: God Presides Over the Fate of All Mankind). Then, I fellowshipped, “The government doesn’t allow faith now, and it even opposes God. You’re listening to them and don’t dare believe. Who can really save people—is it God, or the government? The pandemic is getting worse and worse these days. Whether rich or poor, of higher or lower station, humans are insignificant in the face of disaster. No person can save us from Satan’s power, or protect us through the disasters. Only God can save us! God has become flesh in the last days, expressing truths and working to save man. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. You all are in charge of this village. If you don’t lead the villagers to worship God, but instead oppose Him, they will have been ruined by all of you.” The village chief then said, “I believe that people’s fates are in God’s hands, and I want to guide the villagers to believe in God.” The treasurer said, “I know having faith is good, but we’ll be arrested by the government if we don’t comply with them. Our hands are tied.” I read them another passage of God’s words: **“We trust that no country or power can stand in the way of what God wishes to achieve. Those who obstruct God’s work, resist the word of God and disturb and impair the plan of God shall ultimately be punished by God. He who defies the work of God shall be sent to hell; any country that defies the work of God shall be destroyed; any nation that rises up to oppose the work of God shall be wiped from this earth and shall cease to exist. I urge the people of all nations, of all countries, and even of all industries to listen to the voice of God, to behold the work of God and to pay attention to the fate of mankind, in order to make God the most holy, the most honorable, the highest, and the only object of worship**

among mankind, and to allow the whole of mankind to live under the blessing of God, just as the descendants of Abraham lived under the promise of Jehovah, and just as Adam and Eve, whom God created first, lived in the Garden of Eden” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 2: God Presides Over the Fate of All Mankind). I fellowshiped, “God’s disposition tolerates no human offense. He will punish all those who go against His work. That’s God’s righteous disposition, and no one can escape it. Disasters are continuing to grow. It is God’s reminder and warning to mankind, as well as a punishment. Take, for example, the government in the southern part of Wa State in Myanmar frequently arresting believers, and not permitting acceptance of Almighty God’s work. This is serious resistance against God. This June there was a flood there, and many houses were swept away. Offending other people won’t matter at all, but the consequences of resisting God will be serious. We’ve all done things against God before, but as long as we repent to God, and we guide the villagers to investigate the true way and turn toward God, God will have mercy and forgive us.” After my fellowship, the treasurer’s attitude didn’t seem so rigid. The chief and the others all agreed to let us share the gospel with the villagers. The next morning, we called the villagers together and gave them testimony on God’s work of the last days. After more than 10 days of fellowship, over 40 people in the village, including the chief and deputy chief, had all accepted Almighty God’s work. They longed for God’s words, eagerly participated in gatherings, and proactively got others to come listen to sermons. Later, with brothers and sisters pulling together and working hard, people in many villages accepted Almighty God’s work.

As more and more people accepted God’s gospel of the last days, the government’s oppression became more severe. I’d been reported a few times for spreading the gospel. Most people from my hometown knew I

believed in Almighty God, and the police were looking for me everywhere. Since I wasn't at home, they went to my parents' house, then arrested and locked up my unbeliever mother. I was furious. My faith was right and proper, and sharing the gospel was also the right thing to do. The government hunted me everywhere because of my faith and my evangelism, and said they wouldn't free my mom until they got me. That is incredibly evil! My family didn't understand me, saying that it was my faith that got my mom arrested. They called me up and accused me of being heartless. My brother and sister even told me I should turn myself in. I was miserable, and really worried that my mom would suffer. I kept on sharing the gospel, but not as actively as before. In my pain, I prayed to God, "Oh God, my stature is too small. My mom was arrested and my family isn't understanding—I'm really miserable. Please give me faith so that I can stand strong." I read God's words after praying: **"There is not one person among you who is protected by the law—you are, instead, sanctioned by the law. Even more problematic is that people do not understand you: Be it your relatives, your parents, your friends, or your colleagues, none of them understand you. When you are abandoned by God, it is impossible for you to continue living on earth, but even so, people cannot bear to be away from God, which is the significance of God's conquest of people, and is the glory of God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). God's words really pulled at my heartstrings. As believers, sharing the gospel and taking the right path in life is the most righteous thing in this world. But not only do believers fail to get legal protection in anti-God countries, they're condemned and arrested, and even their family members are implicated. The government officials say drug traffickers and murderers can be pardoned; only believers can't be pardoned. Also, once a believer is caught,

they're fined, imprisoned, or given to an official as a laborer. Believers aren't treated like humans at all. This is such a dark and evil country. It's the modern-day Sodom, opposed to God. Being a believer, following God today means being persecuted, but from God's words I saw His will. God was using those difficulties to perfect our faith, while also allowing us to gain discernment over the government's evil essence of opposing God so I could reject and forsake Satan, and truly turn toward God. I didn't feel as awful once I'd understood God's will. I felt ready to rely on God and keep sharing the gospel.

Later, I brought the new believers together and gave them fellowship on God's words to help them know God's work and understand His will. We listened to a hymn of God's words together, **"Time Lost Will Never Come Again": "Awaken, brothers! Awaken, sisters! My day will not be delayed; time is life, and to seize back time is to save life! The time is not far off! If you fail the college entrance examination, you can study and retake it as many times as you like. However, My day will brook no further delay. Remember! Remember! I urge you with these good words. The end of the world unfolds before your very eyes, and great disasters rapidly draw near. Which is more important: your life, or your sleep, your food and drink and clothing? The time has come for you to weigh these things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 30). After listening to the hymn, I fellowshiped, "Some people say they'll believe once Satan's forces fall, and there's no more oppression, but then, God's work to save mankind will be over, and we will have utterly lost our chance at God's salvation. If we're held back by the government and we don't dare have faith if it says not to, then can the government save us, instead? Of course not. Only God can save us. If we listen to them and don't believe, then we'll lose God's

salvation in the last days. When God's work ends, we'll be destroyed along with Satan. We've suffered from the government's suppression and arrests because of our faith, but this suffering has value. We have to pay a price if we want to receive God's salvation. And God rules over everything, so whether we're arrested is entirely in His hands. If we are arrested, it is with God's permission. We should submit to Him and learn our lesson." Then I read more of Almighty God's words: **"Those whom God refers to as 'overcomers' are those who are still able to stand witness and maintain their confidence and devotion to God when under the influence of Satan and while being laid siege to by Satan, that is, when they find themselves amidst the forces of darkness. If you are still able to keep a pure heart before God and maintain your genuine love for God no matter what, then you are standing witness in front of God, and this is what God refers to as being an 'overcomer'"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Maintain Your Devotion to God). **"You should now see that the reason God does not destroy Satan in the time of His salvation of man is that humans may see clearly how Satan has corrupted them and the extent to which it has corrupted them, and how God purifies and saves them. Ultimately, when people have understood the truth and clearly seen Satan's odious countenance, and beheld the monstrous sin of Satan's corruption of them, God will destroy Satan, showing them His righteousness"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). I fellowshiped, "God allows the government's oppression and arrests. This is testing if we truly believe in God, if we have faith or not. Through this kind of oppression and hardship, if we can maintain our faith, and do not shrink back in negativity or betray God, but instead keep following God, gathering and sharing the gospel, then that is having testimony, and Satan will be shamed and defeated. That suffering has value. Why doesn't

God just destroy Satan right now? It is to use Satan as a way to perfect a group of overcomers while also having us learn to discern good from evil. We can see how God works to save people, and how Satan corrupts and hurts people. Then one day, when God destroys Satan, we will see how righteous God is. If God just directly wiped Satan out, we'd have no discernment over Satan, and we wouldn't hate and forsake it. Just like those anti-God regimes of Satan, and those devils who run the government—they're really good at disguise and deception. When they appear to do some good things, it's just so that people will adore them. Almighty God has appeared and is working in the last days to save mankind. He has exposed those regimes' demonic essence of opposing God. They deny and condemn Almighty God, and arrest, fine, sentence and imprison His believers. They're just like the devil Satan, which gets people to worship it, and doesn't allow them to believe in and follow God. Ultimately they'll all go down to hell and be punished along with it." After fellowship, the newcomers had discernment and faith, and all actively engaged in the gathering. I was really happy.

After that, those new believers brought some of their loved ones to come listen to sermons. After a few days, over 80 people from that village had accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. I saw God's wisdom exercised based on Satan's trickery. Satan played all sorts of tricks to stop the gospel work, to leave us frustrated and depressed, but God's words gave us faith and strength. We put all we had into sharing the gospel, and saw God's guidance. I was really grateful to God. I saw that no human can stop what God wants to complete, and I gained even more faith for sharing the gospel.

In September 2022, a new believer brought us to her parents' village to preach the gospel, where over 40 people were interested in the true way. I

was really happy, and started sharing testimony with them on God's work of the last days. Then I received news that the regional government officials showed my photo at their meeting, saying I was wanted, and told people to report me if they saw me preaching the gospel. The police were also stopping cars with roadblocks, searching for me. I was thinking, with the police looking for me everywhere, if they did get me someday, they'd probably kill me. Should I keep sharing the gospel? If I stopped, what about the villagers in the middle of investigating God's work? They wouldn't be able to hear God's voice and accept His new work. I wouldn't be fulfilling my responsibility. The brothers and sisters wanted to send me away, out of consideration for my safety. I was afraid, so I went ahead and left. I felt pretty guilty after that. I wanted to go back and keep preaching the gospel to those villagers. So I prayed to God, "God, the police are looking for me everywhere, and I'm afraid. But I know whether I'm arrested or not is fully in Your hands. I want to entrust You with everything. Please guide me so I have the faith to keep preaching and bearing witness to You." I read something in God's words later: **"Are you aware of the burden on your shoulders, your commission, and your responsibility? Where is your sense of historic mission? How will you adequately serve as a master in the next age? Do you have a strong sense of masterhood? How would you explain the master of all things? Is it really the master of all living creatures and of all physical things in the world? What plans do you have for the progress of the next phase of the work? How many people are waiting for you to be their shepherd? Is your task a heavy one? They are poor, pitiable, blind, and at a loss, wailing in the darkness—where is the way? How they yearn for the light, like a shooting star, to suddenly descend and dispel the forces of darkness that have oppressed man for so many years. Who can know the full extent to which they**

anxiously hope, and how they pine, day and night, for this? Even on a day when the light flashes past, these deeply suffering people remain imprisoned in a dark dungeon without hope of release; when will they weep no longer? Terrible is the misfortune of these fragile spirits who have never been granted rest, and long have they been kept bound in this state by merciless bonds and frozen history. And who has heard the sound of their wailing? Who has looked upon their miserable state? Has it ever occurred to you how grieved and anxious God's heart is? How can He bear to see innocent mankind, whom He created with His own hands, suffering such torment? Human beings, after all, are the victims who have been poisoned. And although man has survived to this day, who would have known that mankind has long been poisoned by the evil one? Have you forgotten that you are one of the victims? Are you not willing to strive, out of your love for God, to save these survivors? Are you not willing to devote all of your energy to repaying God, who loves mankind like His own flesh and blood? When all is said and done, how would you interpret being used by God to live your extraordinary life? Do you really have the resolve and confidence to live the meaningful life of a pious, God-serving person?" (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. How Should You Attend to Your Future Mission?). God's words were really inspiring, but also made me feel guilty. So many people still haven't accepted God's salvation of the last days, and live under Satan's power. They're helpless and in pain. God feels sorrow and a sense of urgency for them. Some of them work very long days to make money, living hard, exhausting lives, and some still feel empty and miserable inside even after getting a bit of money. They don't know the value of human life and can't find any direction. Some people want to seek the true way, but they're too afraid, because of the government's oppression and arrests. That

means we need to fellowship on God's words with them, testify to God's work, and use God's words to resolve their problems, so they can see the truth, light and hope in God's words, and accept God's salvation. Also, disasters are getting worse these days, and many people still haven't heard God's voice. They have nothing to turn to in disaster. Sharing the gospel with these people was my responsibility. God doesn't want anyone He wishes to save to succumb to the disasters. If I stopped spreading the gospel for the sake of my own safety, I wouldn't be doing my duty. Then I'd have such a huge debt to God, and wouldn't deserve to be called part of His family. I thought of how I used to be just like those villagers, living under Satan's control without any goal or hope. God inspired brothers and sisters to share the gospel with me over and over, until I finally heard God's voice and received His salvation of the last days. That was God's love and mercy for me. I had to consider God's will, and do everything in my power to bear witness to God's work and repay His love. The next day, I went back to that village to continue sharing the gospel. But just a few days later, the newcomer who took us there left on urgent business. I was a bit worried. Would I end up arrested without a local's protection? But if I stopped sharing the gospel, those investigating the true way would be delayed in accepting Almighty God's work. Over the last few days, they'd been sneaking up into the hills to hear us preach in their efforts to seek and investigate. They longed for it so much. If I ran off out of fear of arrest, unwilling to keep preaching, I would owe them, as well as hurt God. So I met with those investigating the true way one by one and read Almighty God's words to them. In the end, every one of them accepted Almighty God's work. After that, they brought others to hear our sermons. More and more people accepted God's new work after hearing Almighty God's words. Seeing God's guidance, I felt incredibly grateful to Him. The village

militia often did evening patrols, limiting our gatherings. So, I fellowshipped on God's words with new believers to help them see through Satan's tricks and learn to gather in secret. Knowing that, they weren't impacted by the government anymore. They all snuck up to the hills or into vegetable fields to gather at night. I had even more energy for preaching when I saw that.

I remember once, there was a sister who told me that a few people I'd preached to had been arrested by the government for hearing our sermons. Their unbeliever family went to my house looking for me, saying they'd kill me. My sister told me to be careful. It was scary for me. If I'd been at home then, who knows what they would have done to me. If I kept spreading the gospel there and they got their hands on me, they definitely wouldn't let me go easily. I wanted to leave that place and not share the gospel there anymore. But thinking about leaving was really upsetting for me. Then I remembered these words from God: **"You know that all things in the environment that surrounds you are there by My permission, all planned by Me. See clearly and satisfy My heart in the environment I have given to you. Do not fear, the Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He stands behind you and He is your shield"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 26). I could see from God's words that I was facing this situation with God's permission. Since I was sharing the gospel, testifying about God's work, Satan was sure to stop at nothing to get in my way, to disrupt my state of mind so that I'd be too afraid to keep spreading the gospel. That was Satan's evil intention. If I stopped spreading the gospel out of fear, clinging to life and limb, wouldn't I be falling for Satan's tricks? Whether I was arrested and whether I was going to die, was all in God's hands. Job suffered many things when Satan was testing him. He lost all his children, all his wealth, and he broke out in boils all over his body. But God wouldn't permit Satan to take away

Job's life. Satan didn't dare go against what God said—it didn't dare harm Job's life. Now if God didn't allow those people to harm me, they couldn't do anything to me. My life was in God's hands—they didn't get to decide if I lived or died. If I were arrested, there would be God's good will behind it, and I should submit. I thought to myself, since things were bad in this village, I could go preach in another one. I'd be fine if I employed some wisdom and watched my back. As the Lord Jesus said: **"But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another"** (Matthew 10:23). I read more of Almighty God's words then: **"God has a plan for every one of His followers. Each one of them has an environment, furnished for man by God, in which to perform their duty, and they have the grace and favor of God that is man's to enjoy. They also have special circumstances, which God lays out for man, and there is much suffering they must undergo—it is nothing like the smooth sailing that man imagines. Beyond this, if you acknowledge that you are a created being, you must prepare yourself to suffer and pay a price for the sake of fulfilling your responsibility to spread the gospel and for the sake of doing your duty properly. The price might be suffering some physical ailment or hardship, or suffering the persecutions of the great red dragon or the misunderstandings of worldly people, as well as the tribulations one undergoes when spreading the gospel: being sold out, being beaten and scolded, being condemned—even being mobbed and put in mortal danger. It is possible, in the course of spreading the gospel, that you will die before God's work is completed, and that you will not live to see the day of God's glory. You must be prepared for this. This is not meant to frighten you; it is a fact. ... How did those disciples of the Lord Jesus die? Among the disciples, there were those who were stoned, dragged behind a horse, crucified upside down,**

dismembered by five horses—every sort of death befell them. What was the reason for their deaths? Were they lawfully executed for their crimes? No. They were condemned, beaten, scolded, and put to death because they spread the Lord's gospel and were rejected by the people of the world—that is how they were martyred. ... No matter what the means of their death and departure was nor how it happened, it was not how God defined the final outcomes of those lives, of those created beings. This is something you must see clearly. On the contrary, they used precisely those means to condemn this world and to testify to God's deeds. These created beings used their most precious lives—they used the last moment of their lives to testify to God's deeds, to testify to God's great power, and to declare to Satan and the world that God's deeds are right, that the Lord Jesus is God, that He is the Lord, and God's incarnate flesh. Even down to the final moment of their lives, they never denied the name of the Lord Jesus. Was this not a form of judgment upon this world? They used their lives to proclaim to the world, to confirm to human beings that the Lord Jesus is the Lord, that the Lord Jesus is Christ, that He is God's incarnate flesh, that the work of redemption He did for all humanity allows humanity to live on—this fact is forever unchanging. Those who were martyred for spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus, to what extent did they perform their duty? Was it to the ultimate extent? How was the ultimate extent manifested? (They offered their lives.) That's right, they paid the price with their lives. Family, wealth, and the material things of this life are all external things; the only thing that is related to the self is life. To every living person, life is the thing most worthy of being treasured, the most precious thing and, as it happens, these people were able to offer their most precious possession—life—as confirmation of and testimony to

God's love for mankind. Until the day they died, they did not deny God's name, nor did they deny God's work, and they used their last moments of life to testify to the existence of this fact—is this not the highest form of testimony? This is the best way of doing one's duty; this is what it is to fulfill one's responsibility. When Satan threatened and terrorized them, and, in the end, even when it made them pay the price of their lives, they did not abandon their responsibility. This is what it is to fulfill one's duty to the utmost extent. What do I mean by this? Do I mean to have you use the same method to testify of God and to spread His gospel? You do not necessarily need to do so, but you must understand that this is your responsibility, that if God needs you to, you should accept it as something you are honor-bound to do" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). God's words helped me realize that the Lord Jesus' disciples were condemned, imprisoned, and suffered all sorts of persecution for the sake of spreading the gospel. Many of them were martyred. But no matter what kind of end they met, they were able to give up their precious lives, never denying God even at death. They gave testimony to God and glorified Him with their own lives. That's the loftiest of testimonies and the best way to do a duty. But as for me, chased by the government and threatened by evil people, I greedily clung to life, and wanted to flee the village, not keep on preaching and watering newcomers. Where was my testimony? I reflected: Why did I become afraid whenever faced with a life-or-death situation? It was because I treasured life too much, not understanding life and death. The fact is, God has already determined our lives and deaths. Being martyred for God, though the flesh dies, isn't really death at all. It doesn't mean you won't have a good outcome and destination. The Lord Jesus said: **"Whoever will save his life shall lose it:**

and whoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:25). If I didn’t do my duty and betrayed God because I was clinging to life, my flesh may not suffer, but God would cast me out in disgust and my soul would be punished. If I could sacrifice my life to bear witness to God, and would rather die than betray Him, that would shame Satan, and it would be meaningful. At this realization, I no longer feared for my life, and I resolved: As long as I’m not in custody, as long as I’m still breathing, I will keep spreading the gospel and bearing witness to God to shame Satan. I kept on preaching the gospel after that. Before long, most people in the village had accepted Almighty God’s work.

I went to another village after that to spread the gospel. Over a dozen people joined at first, but then the township government found us out while we were preaching to a husband and wife. The township chief, deputy chief, treasurer, and some militia members—over a dozen people total—all burst into the room and said we had to go with them. I was feeling pretty nervous at the time. Were they going to arrest me and send me to prison? The government had been after me. They’d told my name to every home, saying to report me if I was found preaching the gospel. They wouldn’t let me off lightly if I were recognized. And those new believers would be impacted—what about that? I was praying nonstop, asking God for faith so I could stand strong in my testimony. Before long, a brother and sister who had gone to that village to preach the gospel with us were arrested, too. They took all of us to the township government and took away our phones. Then the township chief started interrogating us: “Who are you people? Have you come here to preach the gospel?” We didn’t respond. So they shut us up into a dark room and had five or six militia members watch us. I was worried that they would recognize me. If I were sent to my hometown, I was sure to be sentenced to prison to be tortured and defiled by them. The regional

government head said, when they got me they'd cut my hair, hang a sign around my neck, and parade me around. At that time, I kept praying to God, "Oh God, I'm ready to submit to being arrested, but my stature is small. Please give me faith and watch over me so I can stand firm." After praying, I thought of a testimonial video I'd seen before. Some brothers and sisters who were beaten to death in prison by the Chinese police didn't deny or betray God, even facing death. Many others were brutally tortured, sentenced and imprisoned, but by praying and relying on God, they developed true faith through God's words. They swore to the death not to betray God, even if they were jailed for life. They bore firm, resounding testimonies. I was really inspired. I remembered God's words: **"The utmost faith and love are required from us in this stage of work. We may stumble from the slightest carelessness, for this stage of work is different from all the previous ones: What God is perfecting is mankind's faith, which is both invisible and intangible. What God does is convert words to faith, to love, and to life. People must reach a point where they have endured hundreds of refinements and possess faith greater than Job's. They must endure incredible suffering and all manner of torture without ever leaving God. When they are obedient unto death, and have great faith in God, then this stage of God's work is complete"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (8)). God's words showed me that His work in the last days is to use words to perfect our faith and love, so that we can practice and experience His words through oppression and hardship, so His words become our lives. I thought back on being oppressed and pursued by the government. When I was timid and fearful, it was entirely God's words that guided me, giving me the faith to keep preaching. Now that I'd been apprehended, I had to have the faith to stand firm. Even if I had to do time and be defiled, or even died, I was

ready to submit. Then a church hymn called “Life’s Testimony” came to mind: “One day I may be captured and persecuted for bearing witness to God, this suffering is for the sake of righteousness, which I know in my heart. If my life is gone like a spark in the blink of an eye, I will still feel proud that I can follow Christ and bear witness to Him in this life. If I cannot see the great event of the expansion of the kingdom gospel, I will still offer up the most beautiful wishes. If I cannot see the day the kingdom is realized, but I can shame Satan today, then my heart will be filled with joy and peace. ... God’s words spread all across the world, the light has appeared among man. Christ’s kingdom arises and is established within adversity. The darkness is about to pass, a righteous dawn has come. Time and reality have borne testimony for God” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). This hymn was really inspiring for me. I understood if I were arrested because I spread the gospel, it would be persecution for righteousness. Now that I’d been caught, I’d probably go to prison, unable to preach anymore. But although I was arrested and persecuted, I had the chance to give wonderful testimony for God and shame Satan. I felt really proud. This thought gave me faith. After daybreak, they questioned us again. Seeing they weren’t getting anything out of us, they fined us 3,000 kyat and let us go. They also warned us not to keep preaching, and said lots of things blaspheming God. I hated those devils even more.

After I was freed, I still kept spreading the gospel. One day, a brother called and told me, “The township officials know you’re an outsider come to preach the gospel. They arrested me and two new believers to get us to sell you out. But none of us talked, so they fined us and let us go. They also said that if they run into you preaching again, they’ll rape you on the spot. They’re looking for you everywhere, hurry up and run....” I could hardly believe my ears when this brother told me that. When I heard they said

they'd rape me if they found me preaching I was incensed. Those people really were demons, and had no humanity! I was just a believer sharing the gospel, but they were so hateful. They wouldn't let us have faith, wanting to arrest, persecute, and fine us, even rape and defile me. They really were anti-God demons. The more they oppressed me, the more I wanted to preach and bear witness.

Then in October, we went to another village to spread the gospel. Brothers and sisters had preached there before, but their pastor spread rumors to keep believers from investigating the true way and the government started arresting believers. The villagers, misled by rumors plus afraid of being arrested, didn't dare investigate the true way. Spreading the gospel would be difficult for us. I prayed, asking God for guidance. Then, I sought out four people with a fairly good understanding of the truth and fellowshiped with them on what the true way is, what false ways are, and how God utilizes Satan's oppression and disruptions in the last days to reveal and perfect people, to sort the wheat from the tares, the wise virgins from the foolish. The foolish ones only listen to humans, to Satan. They don't seek and investigate when they hear the news that the Lord has come and uttered words, so they can't welcome the bridegroom. Only those trying to listen for God's voice, who are firm in their faith to follow God are the wise ones. Only they can attend the wedding feast with the Lord. After that fellowship, all four of them wanted to keep investigating. Over the next few days, I held gatherings for them, fellowshiping on God's words. One of them said, "I listened to the pastor and the village chief before. They said not to listen to Almighty God's words, so I didn't. I nearly missed my chance to welcome the Lord's coming. I'm not listening to people anymore. I'm listening to God." Another one said, "Reading Almighty God's words has convinced me that He is the Lord Jesus returned. No matter how others

may stand in my way, I'm accepting Almighty God." I was so happy to hear them say things like that. After that, they brought some of their relatives to listen to sermons, and in no time, over 20 people had accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. That these new believers could seek the true way and stand strong amidst the rumors was really moving for me. It was all because of the guidance of God's words. My mom was finally released in December. She did hard labor every day of the several months she was locked up. The government workers said they'd definitely get me and put me away. I thought about back before my mom was released, police with their guns and batons often going to my house to arrest me, saying they wouldn't free her until I went back home. But now they've released my mom without capturing me. I've really experienced that God rules everything, and whether I'm arrested is entirely in His hands. I'm not constrained—I've kept preaching and bearing witness to God.

In preaching the gospel, I've encountered many difficulties, including feeling down and weak. But every time God's words have guided me, allowing me to stand strong in depression and weakness, giving me the faith to keep preaching and testifying to God. I've truly experienced that God is using these struggles to perfect my faith. I give thanks to God. I will fulfill my responsibility, share God's gospel of the last days with more people, and repay God's love.

54. Selfishness Is Vile

By Yang Shuo, China

At the beginning of 2021, Sister Zhang Yichen and I were supporting a newly established church together. Yichen was new to the faith and didn't have much life experience, but she was of good caliber and actively pursued the truth, so I wanted to cultivate her as quickly as possible, because this would make the church's work run much more smoothly. I intentionally got Yichen involved in all of the church's different work projects and I would support her whenever I noticed any of her deficiencies. After a period of training, Yichen made great progress. But several months later, she was promoted and reassigned. I was reluctant to let her go and felt like I was losing a very capable assistant. Thinking of how I'd have to handle all the church's work on my own going forward, having to work harder was one thing, but if my work performance suffered, what would people think of me? Then it occurred to me that it would benefit the church's work for her to take on a greater load. I shouldn't be so selfish—when Yichen left, I could just cultivate someone else.

Soon after that, a few nearby churches organized a gathering for watering workers, to summarize and share their experiences. The leader asked me to pick a watering worker to attend. At the time, I considered recommending Sister Wang Mingxi. She was an effective waterer and very meticulous and responsible. If I sent her to the gathering, she could cultivate even more brothers and sisters when she returned, and then the church's watering work would be even more effective, which would make me look good. So I sent Mingxi to the gathering. However, a few days after Mingxi returned from the gathering, the leader kept seeking her out. I couldn't help but wonder: "Is the leader going to promote Mingxi? She's an

experienced waterer in our church. If she leaves, won't our watering work suffer? Then what will the brothers and sisters think of me? If I had only known, I would never have let her attend that gathering." Later on, Mingxi told me there was another church in dire need of watering workers, so the leader planned to reassign her. I was reluctant to assent to this, but I worried that if I didn't agree, the leader would say I was selfish and inconsiderate of God's will. I had no choice but to let Mingxi go. After she left, I felt pretty depressed. I thought to myself: "If the new believers leave the church because there are no capable workers to water them, will the leader deal with me and say I don't fulfill my responsibility? How could I deal with that kind of shaming?" The more I thought, the more resistant I felt.

One day, when I returned home from a gathering, two sisters who were working to water newcomers said to me: "We received a letter from the leader asking you to find two more watering workers and to write assessments for the two of us." When I heard this, I was visibly unhappy. I thought to myself: "Is the leader planning to reassign them as well? I only just trained up these two sisters. I've been able to delegate a lot of work to them and have much less to worry about now. If they're reassigned, not only will my workload increase, my work performance will definitely suffer. If that happens, won't the leader say I'm not a good leader?" After this occurred to me, I unhappily replied: "I really don't know what the leader is thinking." The two sisters saw that I looked down and perplexedly asked: "What's the matter? Isn't the leader just asking you to find two more watering workers?" After hearing their response, I felt a little embarrassed. After regaining my composure, I perfunctorily replied, "Alright, then we should choose some qualified candidates." That's what I said aloud, but in my mind I was contesting the decision: "Is the leader treating our church like a talent training center? First she wants this one, now she wants that

one. The church's work has finally started making progress, but how are we supposed to proceed if she reassigns these talents?" The more I thought about it, the worse I felt and I began to feel some animosity toward the leader. I continued to fulfill my duties, but with less enthusiasm than before. Soon after, during a gathering, the leader said she wanted to hear more about Brother Zhao Chengzhi, because she wanted to promote and cultivate him. As soon as I heard this, that resentful feeling returned. I thought to myself, "Chengzhi has performed well in his duties and I want to assign him to take charge of watering work. If all these people are reassigned, how am I supposed to do all this work by myself? Can I really get good results then?" The more I thought about it, the angrier I became: "Go ahead, reassign away! Far be it from me to get in the way of the church's work." After that, I just couldn't calm myself down and felt all flustered in the gathering. After the gathering, I trudged back home and decided to write a letter to the leader, asking her to not reassign Chengzhi. At the time, I realized that I was being irrational, and so I thought better of writing the letter. But I was still upset and feeling down.

Later on, the leader held a gathering with us, and I fellowshiped about my recent state and behavior. The leader showed me a passage of God's word: **"The essence of the antichrists' selfishness and vileness is obvious; their manifestations of this kind are particularly prominent. The church entrusts them with a piece of work, and if it brings renown and benefits, and lets them show their face, they are very interested, and willing to accept it. If it is work that is thankless or involves offending people, or won't allow them to show their face or it is of no benefit to their status or reputation, they have no interest, and will not accept it, as if this work has nothing to do with them, and is not the work they ought to be doing. When they encounter difficulties, there is**

no chance that they will seek the truth to solve them, much less try to see the bigger picture and give any consideration to the work of the church. For example, within the scope of the work of God's house, based on overall work needs, there may be some personnel transfers. If a few people are transferred from a church, what would be the sensible way for that church's leaders to treat the issue? What is the problem if they are concerned only with their own church's interests, rather than the overall interests, and if they are absolutely unwilling to transfer people? Why, as a church leader, are they unable to submit to the overall arrangements of God's house? Is such a person considerate of God's will? Are they attentive to the work's big picture? If they do not think of the work of God's house as a whole, but only of their own church's interests, are they not very selfish and contemptible? Church leaders should unconditionally submit to the sovereignty and arrangements of God, and to the centralized arrangements and coordination of God's house. This is what accords with the truth principles. When required by the work of God's house, no matter who they are, everyone should submit to the coordination and arrangements of God's house, and absolutely should not be controlled by any individual leader or worker as if they belong to them or are subject to their decisions. The obedience of God's chosen ones to the centralized arrangements of the house of God is perfectly natural and justified, and may not be defied by anyone. Unless an individual leader or worker makes an irrational transferal that is not in accordance with principle—in which case this may be disobeyed—all of God's chosen ones should obey, and no leader or worker has the right or any reason to try to control anyone. Would you say there is any work that is not the work of the house of God? Is there any work that does not involve

the expansion of God's kingdom gospel? It is all the work of God's house, each work is equal, and there is no 'yours' and 'mine.' If the transferal is in line with principle and based on the requirements of church work, then these people should go where they are needed most. And yet, what is the antichrists' response when faced with this kind of situation? They find various pretexts and excuses to keep these suitable people by their side, and they only offer two ordinary people, and then find some pretext to turn the screws on you, either saying how work is so busy, or that they're short-handed, people are hard to find, and if these two are transferred, work will take a hit. And they ask you what they are supposed to do, and make you feel that having people transferred would mean you owe them. Is this not the way the devil operates? This is how the unbelievers do things. Are people who always try and protect their own interests in the church—are they good people? Are they people who act according to principle? Absolutely not. They are unbelievers and nonbelievers. And is this not selfish and vile? If someone of good caliber is transferred from under the antichrist to perform another duty, in their heart the antichrist doggedly resists and rejects it—they want to call it quits, and have no enthusiasm for being a leader or group head. What problem is this? Why do they have no obedience toward the arrangements of the church? They think the transferal of their 'right hand man' will impact the productivity and progress of their work, and that their status and reputation will be affected as a result, which will force them to work harder and suffer more to guarantee productivity—which is the last thing they want to do. They have grown used to comfort, and don't want to work harder or suffer more, and so they don't want to let the person go. If the house of God insists on the transfer, they make a big

fuss and even refuse to do their own work. Is this not selfish and vile? God's chosen ones should be centrally allocated by the house of God. This has nothing to do with any leader, team head, or individual. Everyone must act according to principle; this is the rule of God's house. When antichrists do not act according to the principles of God's house, when they constantly scheme for the sake of their own status and interests, and make brothers and sisters of good caliber serve them in order to consolidate their power and status, is this not selfish and vile? Outwardly, keeping people of good caliber by their side and not allowing them to be transferred by the house of God appears as if they are thinking of church work, but in fact they are only thinking of their own power and status, and not about the work of the church at all. They are afraid that they will do the church work poorly, be replaced, and lose their status. When antichrists give no thought to the wider work of God's house, think only of their own status, protect their own status with no compunction for the cost to the interests of the house of God, and defend their own status and interests to the detriment of the church's work, this is selfish and vile" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists.

Excursus Four: Summarizing the Character of Antichrists and the Essence of Their Disposition (Part One)). God's words expose how antichrists are deeply selfish and despicable. In order to preserve their status and reputation, they hoard people and are unwilling to share them out, not considering the church's work in the slightest. I saw how my own behavior was just like that of an antichrist. Especially when I read the lines, **"When antichrists do not act according to the principles of God's house, when they constantly scheme for the sake of their own status and interests, and make brothers and sisters of good caliber serve them in order to consolidate their power and status, is this not selfish and vile?"** God's words cut me to the quick. I reflected

on my recent behavior: When I learned that Mingxi might be promoted, I worried that the watering work would suffer and my reputation would be damaged, so I didn't want to let her leave, and was even regretful that I'd sent her to attend the gathering. When the leader asked me to find two more waterers and write assessments of my sisters, I guessed that the leader was planning on reassigning them and felt resistant and argumentative. I even developed animosity toward the leader. When the leader wanted to promote Chengzhi, I knew that he satisfied the principles for promotion and training, but when I thought about how it would have an impact on the gospel and watering work of the church if he left, I didn't want to let him leave. I treated the brothers and sisters as my capable right-hand men, and wanted to keep them all to myself to help me solidify my status and reputation and satisfy my selfish desires. I didn't think of the interests of the church, nor did I consider how to act to satisfy God. I was just so selfish and lowly. The unbelievers of the secular world do whatever they can to keep their top talent by their side to help them expand and develop their enterprises. I went about my own duty in just the same way. I treated my duty like my own personal enterprise, acting according to self-serving principles and only considering my own reputation and status. God detested and was disgusted by such actions—I was walking the antichrist's path of resisting God.

Later on, I came across another passage of God's words: **"If someone says they love the truth and that they pursue the truth, but in essence, the goal they pursue is to distinguish themselves, to show off, to make people think highly of them, to achieve their own interests, and the performing of their duty is not to obey or satisfy God, and instead is to achieve fame, gain, and status, then their pursuit is illegitimate. That being the case, when it comes to the work of the church, are their**

actions an obstacle, or do they help move it forward? They are clearly an obstacle; they do not move it forward. Some people wave the banner of doing the work of the church yet pursue their own personal fame, gain, and status, run their own operation, create their own little group, their own little kingdom—is this kind of person doing their duty? All the work they do essentially disrupts, disturbs, and impairs the work of the church. What is the consequence of their pursuit of fame, gain, and status? First, this affects how God's chosen people eat and drink God's word normally and understand the truth, it hinders their life entry, stops them from entering the right track of faith in God, and leads them onto the wrong path—which harms the chosen ones, and brings them to ruin. And what does it ultimately do to the work of the church? It is disturbance, impairment, and dismantlement. This is the consequence brought about by people's pursuit of fame, gain, and status. When they do their duty in this way, can this not be defined as walking the path of an antichrist? When God asks that people put aside fame, gain, and status, it is not that He is depriving people of the right to choose; rather, it is because, while pursuing fame, gain, and status, people disrupt and disturb the work of the church and the life entry of God's chosen people, and can even have an influence on more people's eating and drinking God's words, understanding the truth, and thus achieving God's salvation. This is an indisputable fact. When people pursue their own fame, gain, and status, it is certain that they will not pursue the truth and that they will not faithfully fulfill their duty. They will only speak and act for the sake of fame, gain, and status, and all the work they do, without the least exception, is for those things' sake. To behave and act in such a way is, without question, to walk the path of antichrists; it is a disruption and disturbance of God's work, and all

its various consequences are hindering the spread of the kingdom gospel and the free flow of God's will within the church. So, one may say with certainty that the path walked by those who pursue fame, gain, and status is the path of resistance against God. It is intentional resistance against Him, naysaying Him—it is to cooperate with Satan in resisting God and standing in opposition to Him. This is the nature of people's pursuit of fame, gain, and status. The problem with people pursuing their own interests is that the goals they pursue are the goals of Satan—they are goals that are wicked and unjust. When people pursue personal interests such as fame, gain, and status, they unwittingly become a tool of Satan, they become an outlet for Satan, and, moreover, they become an embodiment of Satan. They play a negative role in the church; toward the work of the church, and toward the normal church life and normal pursuit of God's chosen people, the effect they have is to disturb and impair; they have an adverse and **negative effect**” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)). Through God's words, I realized that the nature and consequences of failing to practice the truth and always safeguarding one's own interests are truly severe. It disturbs and obstructs the church's work and is a service performed for Satan. The church cultivates and promotes people in order to allow them to receive training in a suitable position, and allow them to make the most out of their skills. This is beneficial for our brothers' and sisters' life entry and the church's work and is in keeping with God's will—it's a positive thing that I, as a leader, should preserve and support. Instead, when I saw brothers and sisters being promoted, I wasn't happy for them, but only considered my own reputation and status. I felt that these brothers and sisters were effective, they were my right-hand men, capable deputies. I would have much less to worry about if they were fulfilling duties in my

church, we could work much more effectively, and my status would be solidified. So when one after the other were promoted and reassigned, I felt resistant, resentful and didn't want to let them leave. I didn't give the slightest thought to what would be better for the church's work, nor did I consider what kind of environment would provide the best training for them, allowing them to put their skills into play. I called that fulfilling my duty? I was clearly acting as Satan's emissary, obstructing the church's work. I was only fulfilling my duty for my own reputation and status, and no matter how much I did, God would not acknowledge it. I thought of the pastors and elders of the religious world who are fully aware that The Church of Almighty God has testified the Lord has returned, and yet, for status and income, they still go to great lengths to stop believers investigating the true way and welcoming the Lord. They treat their believers like their private assets, and keep them firmly within their power. They strive with God for believers and have become antichrists and servants of evil, condemned and cursed by God. Was the way I acted any different from these pastors and elders? If I didn't repent, I would meet the same fate as the Pharisees of the religious world, offending God's disposition and enduring His punishment and curses.

At the time, I came across another passage of God's words: **“For all who perform a duty, no matter how profound or shallow their understanding of the truth is, the simplest way to practice entering into the truth reality is to think of the interests of God's house in everything, and to let go of one's selfish desires, personal intents, motives, pride, and status. Put the interests of God's house first—this is the least one should do. If a person who performs a duty cannot even do this much, then how can they be said to be performing their duty? That is not performing one's duty. You should first think of the**

interests of God's house, be considerate of God's will, and consider the work of the church. Put these things first and foremost; only after that can you think about the stability of your status or how others regard you. Do you not feel that this becomes a little easier when you divide it into two steps and make some compromises? If you practice like this for a while, you will come to feel that satisfying God is not such a difficult thing. Furthermore, you should be able to fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duty, and set aside your selfish desires, intents, and motives; you should have consideration for God's will, and put the interests of God's house, the work of the church, and the duty that you are supposed to perform first. After experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to comport yourself. It is living straightforwardly and honestly, and not being a base, vile person; it is living justly and honorably rather than being despicable, base, and a good-for-nothing. You will feel that this is how a person should act and the image that they should live out. Gradually, your desire to satisfy your own interests will lessen" (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). God's words point out a path of practice. The key to doing our duties is to prioritize the interests of the church and put aside our personal interests to safeguard the church's work. In reality, people with conscience, rationality and humanity, would consider what the work required, and submit to the arrangements of the church if people were reassigned. They wouldn't consider their own interests. The core aspect of one's work as a leader is to water the brothers and sisters and cultivate talent, allowing every brother and sister to put their talents to play and fulfill the duties most suited to them. God's chosen belong to God, not one person. The church can choose to reassign people based upon what is

needed for the work and who is most suited to which duty. I had no right to hoard people for myself. Once I understood this, I was willing to forsake my flesh and no longer selfishly and despicably prioritize my own interests.

One day, I received a letter from the leader, asking me to write an assessment of Chengzhi. She wanted to evaluate whether he could be promoted to lead the watering work. I thought to myself: “Chengzhi currently presides over our church’s gospel and watering work. If he leaves and our work performance suffers, won’t the leader say I’m incompetent?” Just then, I suddenly realized, I was being selfish and self-interested again. Chengzhi was a talented waterer, and it would be more beneficial to the church’s work to have him responsible for a larger portion of work. In turn, he would get more training, so I should be supportive. At the time, I recalled God’s words, which say: **“God is forever supreme and ever honorable, while man is forever base, forever worthless. This is because God is forever making sacrifices and devoting Himself to mankind; man, however, forever takes and strives only for himself. God is forever taking pains for mankind’s survival, yet man never contributes anything for the sake of the light or for righteousness. Even if man makes an effort for a time, it cannot withstand a single blow, for the effort of man is always for his own sake and not for others. Man is always selfish, while God is forever selfless. God is the source of all that is just, good, and beautiful, while man is he who succeeds to and makes manifest all ugliness and evil. God will never alter His essence of righteousness and beauty, yet man is perfectly capable, at any time and in any situation, of betraying righteousness and straying far from God”**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. It Is Very Important to Understand God’s Disposition). God is so holy! God is forever unselfish, and whatever work He does or situation He devises for people, He always does so with

consideration for people's lives, and in order to cleanse and transform our corrupt dispositions, allowing us to be saved and live out normal humanity. Reflecting on myself, as soon as the situation God devised threatened my interests, I complained and resisted and was terribly selfish and despicable. Thinking of God's holiness and selflessness, I felt ashamed, regretful and remorseful. I realized that living in this way was wretched, lowly and worthless. I had to stop being so selfish and despicable, only considering my own reputation and status. I needed to make the interests of the church my first priority. So I collected all of Chengzhi's evaluations and submitted them to the leader and, after that, he was promoted to be a supervisor. After practicing in that way, I felt grounded and peaceful.

Some time later, I noticed that Sister Li Hui had good caliber, fellowshiped the truth in a detailed, layered way, was loving and patient with the brothers and sisters, had the talents needed to spread the gospel and water new believers and was suitable for training. After Chengzhi left, not only did our gospel work not suffer, it even improved a bit. Before, I had always thought that when these people left, our work would suffer. Now I realize I was completely wrong. This was just my excuse for relying on pre-existing assets and not doing practical work. In reality, it's important for one's heart to be in the right place. If you can be considerate of God's will, refrain from acting self-interestedly, train up new talents as soon as others are reassigned, and resolve problems in your work in a timely manner, you will receive God's guidance. And your work will continually improve. Thank God!

55. I've Found My Place

By Rosalie, South Korea

After I believed in God, I pursued very enthusiastically. No matter what duty the church arranged for me, I obeyed. When I had difficulties or problems in my duty, I could also suffer and pay the price to seek a resolution without complaining. Before long, I started to practice watering newcomers, where I was continuously promoted. I felt I was a talent, someone who the church was cultivating, that I pursued more than others, and so as long as I worked hard at my duty, I would be promoted and given important roles. When I thought of this, I felt very pleased with myself.

A while later, I saw many brothers and sisters around my age had served as team leaders or supervisors, and I was envious. I thought, "If they can perform such important duties at such a young age, be valued by the leaders, and admired by the brothers and sisters, I can't be satisfied with the status quo. I have to pursue well and strive to make a major breakthrough in my duty so I can also have an important role." So, I worked harder in my duty. I wasn't afraid to stay up late and suffer. When I had trouble in my duty, I searched God's words to resolve it. But my hard work didn't bring about any change. Due to my poor work ability, I was assigned to do some routine work. After that, when I saw that others around me being promoted, I was even more envious. I knew that I was still inferior to them by far, so I always encouraged myself not to be discouraged or satisfied with the status quo, that I had to pursue and improve, that I still needed to eat and drink more of God's word, and put more effort into my life entry. I thought that once I improved my professional skills and put more effort into life entry, I'd certainly be promoted. So, as I worked hard to improve, I also looked forward to the day I would be promoted.

Before I knew it, two years had passed, and my new partners kept coming and going. Some were promoted, and some became leaders and workers. I started to become suspicious, “I’ve done this duty for quite a while, and those who have done it for a shorter time are promoted one after another, so why has my duty still not changed at all? Do the leaders think I’m not worth cultivating, and that I’m only suitable for routine work? Could it be that I have no chance at all of being promoted? Will I be stuck in this obscure duty forever?” When I thought about this, I suddenly felt like a deflated ball. I suddenly had no drive, I wasn’t as diligent in my duty as before, and I felt no sense of urgency to handle jobs that needed to be done. I simply went through the motions every day or muddled through the tasks. As a result, some deviations and oversights often appeared in my work, but I didn’t take it seriously, and I didn’t reflect on myself properly. Later, I heard that even more brothers and sisters I knew were being promoted, and I felt even more distressed. I thought, “Some of them used to do the same duty as me, but one by one, they’ve now all been promoted, while I’m stuck right where I started. Maybe I’m not someone who pursues the truth, or a worthy subject for cultivation.” This thought felt like a heavy weight on my shoulders. It felt miserable. In those days, I was in a very depressed state, and I felt unmotivated in my duty. I kept thinking I had no future in my belief in God. I felt very aggrieved, and couldn’t accept what was happening. I thought, “Could it be that I am really that bad? Could it be that I am really only suited for routine work? Is there no value in cultivating me at all? All I want is one chance. Why do I have to stay stuck in the corner all the time, where no one notices me?” The more I thought, the more aggrieved and depressed I felt. I sighed all day, and my legs felt too heavy to move. Sometimes, I would cry silently in bed at night, thinking, “If my professional skills are inferior to others, then I’ll work hard to

pursue the truth. I'll read more of God's words and focus more on life entry. When I can fellowship with some practical knowledge, and the leaders see I focus on pursuing the truth, won't they also promote me?" But when I thought like this, I also felt a little guilty. I thought, "Pursuing the truth is a positive thing, and it is what a believer should pursue. But I am using this for the purpose of standing out above others. If I pursue like this, with ambition and desire, God will detest and hate it, won't He? Why aren't I willing to do my duty in obscurity?" I felt a sense of accusation, so I prayed to God as I cried, "God, I know pursuit of status is wrong, but my ambitions and desires are so strong. I keep feeling like it's useless of me to perform my duty in obscurity like this. God, I can't get out of this state. Please lead and guide me in understanding Your will and knowing myself."

One day, I read the words of God: **"For antichrists, status and reputation are their life. No matter how they live, no matter what environment they live in, no matter what work they do, no matter what they strive for, what their goals are, what their life's direction is, it all revolves around having a good reputation and a high status. And this aim does not change; they can never put aside such things. This is the true face of antichrists, and their essence. You could put them in a primeval forest deep in the mountains, and still they would not put aside their pursuit of reputation and status. You can put them among any group of people, and all they can think about is still reputation and status. Although antichrists also believe in God, they see the pursuit of reputation and status as equivalent to faith in God and give it equal weight. Which is to say, as they walk the path of faith in God, they also pursue their own reputation and status. It can be said that in antichrists' hearts, they believe that faith in God and the pursuit of the truth is the pursuit of reputation and status; the pursuit of reputation**

and status is also the pursuit of the truth, and to gain reputation and status is to gain the truth and life. If they feel that they have no reputation or status, that no one admires them, or venerates them, or follows them, then they are very frustrated, they believe there is no point in believing in God, no value to it, and they say to themselves, ‘Is such faith in God a failure? Is it hopeless?’ They often deliberate such things in their hearts, they deliberate how they can carve a place out for themselves in the house of God, how they can have a lofty reputation in the church, so that people listen when they talk, and support them when they act, and follow them wherever they go; so that they have a voice in the church, and prestige, profit, and status—they really focus on such things in their hearts. These are what such people pursue” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). “For antichrists, if their reputation or status is attacked or taken away, it is a matter even more serious than trying to take their life. No matter how many sermons they listen to or how many of God’s words they read, they will not feel sadness or regret over never having practiced the truth and having taken the path of antichrists, nor over their possession of the nature essence of antichrists. Instead, they are always racking their brains for ways to gain status and increase their reputation. ... In their consistent pursuit of reputation and status, they also brazenly deny what God has done. Why do I say that? In the depths of antichrists’ hearts, they believe, ‘All reputation and status are earned by people themselves. Only by gaining a firm foothold among people and gaining reputation and status can they enjoy God’s blessings. Life only has value when people gain absolute power and status. Only this is living like a human. By contrast, it would be useless to live in such a way as to submit to God’s sovereignty and

arrangements in everything, to willingly stand in the position of a created being, and to live like a normal person as spoken of in the word of God—no one would look up to a person like that. A person’s status, reputation, and happiness must be won through their own struggles; they must be fought for and seized with a positive and proactive attitude. No one else will give them to you—waiting around passively can only lead to failure.’ This is how antichrists calculate. This is the disposition of antichrists” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). God revealed that antichrists regard status as more important than life. All they say and do revolves around status and reputation, and they only think about gaining and keeping it. Once they lose their status, they lose the motivation to live. For the sake of status, they can even resist God, betray God, and establish their own kingdoms. I realized I had always regarded status as very important. When I was young, my family often taught me things like “You have to endure great suffering in order to come out on top” and “Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards.” I had always regarded these satanic laws of survival as words to live by. I had always thought that only by gaining status and being held in high esteem would a person be able to live a dignified and worthwhile life, while being content with my lot and being an ordinary, down-to-earth person showed that I lacked aspiration or any real goals. I thought that this was a useless way for a person to live. After I believed in God, my thoughts and views didn’t change. Outwardly, I wasn’t contending or vying, but my ambitions and desires were not small. I only wanted to perform a more important duty, to gain high status, and to gain others’ admiration. When I saw the people around me being promoted to team leaders and supervisors, this only stirred my desire even more, and made me even more discontent with my current situation. To be promoted, I rose early and stayed up late into the night, and

I was willing to suffer and pay any price for my duty. When my hopes were shattered over and over again, I was filled with complaints and resistance to the environment around me. I even felt that there was no point in believing in God and lost my motivation for my duty. I was just going through the motions and muddling through what I could. I saw that since I had come to believe in God, the path I took was not the path of pursuing the truth at all. Everything I did was for name and status. In our duty, God hopes that we are able to pursue the truth, enter into its realities, and escape our corrupt dispositions. But I neglected my task. My mind was not on pursuing the truth, I desired nothing but to gain a high status, and when my desire fell through, I started to slack off, digging myself in deeper. I really had no conscience or reason! I thought of how, despite my years of believing in God, because I didn't pursue the truth, even now, I didn't have much knowledge of my own corrupt disposition. I couldn't even do the duty I already had well. I still muddled through, and there were often problems and deviations in my work. Even like this, I wanted to be promoted and do bigger work. I was so shameless! Only then did I realize that believing in God without pursuing the truth, and blindly pursuing status, would only make me more ambitious and my disposition more arrogant, always wanting to be above others, but unable to obey God's sovereignty and arrangements. Such pursuit is self-destructive, and is hated and cursed by God. Just like those antichrists expelled from the church, they didn't pursue the truth, and they always pursued name, gain, and status. They sought to be admired and adored, and tried to ensnare and control people. The result of this was that they did too much evil and were revealed and cast out by God. Weren't my pursuits the same as theirs? Wasn't I walking the path of resisting God? God's disposition is righteous and cannot be offended. If I refused to correct myself, I would definitely be rejected and cast out by

God! With this in mind, I swore an oath to myself: From now on, I will not pursue status, I will submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements. I will pursue the truth, and do my duty properly and in a down-to-earth manner.

One day, during my devotionals, I read God's word: **"Because people do not recognize God's orchestrations and God's sovereignty, they always face fate defiantly and with a rebellious attitude, and they always want to cast off God's authority and sovereignty and the things fate has in store, hoping in vain to change their current circumstances and alter their fate. But they can never succeed and are thwarted at every turn. This struggle, which takes place deep in one's soul, brings profound pain of the sort that carves itself into one's bones, as one fritters away their life all the while. What is the cause of this pain? Is it because of God's sovereignty, or because a person was born unlucky? Obviously, neither is true. At bottom, it is caused by the paths people take, the ways they choose to live their lives. Some people may not have realized these things. But when you truly know, when you truly come to recognize that God has sovereignty over human fate, when you truly understand that everything God has planned for you and decided for you is a great benefit and protection, then you feel your pain begin to lighten, and your whole being becomes relaxed, free, liberated. Judging from the states of the majority of people, they objectively cannot truly come to terms with the practical value and meaning of the Creator's sovereignty over human fate, even though on a subjective level, they do not want to keep on living as they did before and want relief from their pain; objectively, they cannot truly recognize and submit to the Creator's sovereignty, and still less do they know how to seek out and accept the Creator's orchestrations and arrangements. So, if people cannot truly recognize the fact that the Creator has sovereignty over**

human fate and over all human matters, if they cannot truly submit to the Creator's dominion, then it will be difficult for them not to be driven and fettered by the idea that 'one's fate is in one's own hands.' It will be difficult for them to shake off the pain of their intense struggle against fate and the Creator's authority, and, needless to say, it will also be hard for them to become truly liberated and free, to become people who worship God” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). God's words stirred my heart. Before, I had never compared my state to what these words of God reveal. I thought that these words were addressed to the unbelievers, while I was one of the faithful, and I believed in and obeyed God's sovereignty. But it was only when I calmed down and contemplated this passage of God's word, that I realized that acknowledging God's sovereignty does not represent knowledge of God's almighty sovereignty, much less obedience to God's sovereignty. Although I believed in God, my views on things were still the same as those of unbelievers. Unbelievers always think people's fate is in their own hands, and always fight against fate. They want to change their destiny through their own efforts and live a life of excellence. As a result, they suffer a lot, pay a high price, until finally they are battered and bruised, and even when they are laced with scars, they still don't wake up to reality. Wasn't I the same? I always wanted to change the status quo through my own efforts and relied on my own struggle to strive for promotion and important roles. For this purpose, I suffered in silence, paid a price, and worked hard to learn professional skills. When my desire fell through, I became passive and resistant, and dug myself in deeper. Only then did I see I was so pained and so tired because I was taking the wrong path and had chosen the wrong way of living. I considered satanic fallacies like “One's destiny is in his own hand” and “Man can create a pleasant homeland with his own hands” as

maxims to live by. I believed that to achieve my goal, I had to rely on my own effort to reach it. Faced with my desires falling through over and over again, and being unable to gain promotions or important positions, I could not submit and I always wanted to fight against God, break free from His arrangements, and gain status and reputation through my own efforts. Only then did I see that I was a believer in name only. In reality, I didn't believe in God's sovereignty in my heart, and much less was I willing to obey His arrangements. What was the difference between a believer like me and a nonbeliever? God is the Lord of Creation, and God has sovereignty and control over everything. Each person's destiny, their caliber and strengths, the duty they can perform in the church, what kind of situations they experience at what time, and so on, are all arranged and preordained by God, and no person can escape them or change anything. Only by obeying God's sovereignty and arrangements can our hearts be at peace. Knowing this, I suddenly felt pitiful and pathetic. I had believed in God for years, and though I had eaten and drunk so much of God's word, I was still just like an unbeliever. I didn't know God's omnipotence and sovereignty. I was so arrogant and ignorant! God's word says: **"When you truly understand that everything God has planned for you and decided for you is a great benefit and protection, then you feel your pain begin to lighten, and your whole being becomes relaxed, free, liberated"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). Pondering God's word, I wondered, how could I know this environment was beneficial for me, and was protecting me? As I sought, I realized since I started believing in God, I had never experienced any great failure or setback, and I had not been dismissed or transferred. I had been continuously promoted and cultivated. Without realizing it, I had started thinking I was someone who pursues the truth, and that I was a key subject for cultivation in the church, so I naturally had

come to regard “being promoted” as a goal to pursue. Every time I was promoted, I didn’t receive it as a responsibility and duty from God, and I didn’t pursue the truth in a down-to-earth manner or think about how to use principles in my duty. Instead, I saw my duty as a tool to pursue status and be looked up to by others. I thought the greater the duty and the higher the status, the more people would admire and value me, so I was very concerned about being promoted, and I spent my days worrying about these gains and losses. I had long forgotten what I was really supposed to pursue in my belief in God. Thinking back, my ambition and desires were so big, and if I really had been promoted and given an important role as I wished, I don’t know how arrogant I might have become or what evil I might have done. There are too many examples of such failures. There are many people who can sincerely perform their duties when they have no status, but the moment they have status, their ambitions grow, they start to do evil, and they deceive and ensnare people. To maintain their name, gains, and status, they exclude and suppress others, and bring ruin upon themselves as a result. I saw that status, for those who pursue the truth and walk the right path, is practice and perfection. But for those who don’t pursue the truth or walk the right path, it is temptation and revelation. As of that moment, I still had no status, and just because I hadn’t been promoted or viewed as important, I was so resentful that I didn’t even want to do my duty. I could see that my ambitions and desires were enormous, and that if I had actually been promoted to an important duty, I was certain to fail as badly as those who had already failed. At this point, I truly felt that there was God’s permission in me not being promoted to team leader or supervisor. God used this environment to force me to stop and reflect on myself, so that I could mend my ways, and walk the path of pursuing truth. This environment was what my life required, and it was a great protection of me!

Thinking of this, I felt that I had been so ignorant and blind, and I hadn't understood God's will. I had misunderstood and blamed God. I had truly hurt the heart of God.

After that, I read God's word: **“What kind of heart does God want people to have? First off, this heart must be honest, and they must be able to conscientiously do their duty with their feet on the ground, able to uphold the work of the church, no longer having so-called ‘great ambitions’ or ‘lofty goals.’ Every step leaves a footprint as they follow and worship God, they conduct themselves as created beings; they no longer pursue becoming an exceptional or great person, much less an especially functional person, and they do not worship the creations on alien planets. Additionally, this heart must love the truth. What is primarily meant by loving the truth? It means loving positive things, having a sense of justice, being able to sincerely expend yourself for God, truly love Him, submit to Him, and testify of Him”** (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five Conditions That Must Be Met to Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God). After reading God's word, I was very moved. I felt God's hopes and requirements for people. God does not want people to be famous, great, or lofty. God doesn't ask us to engage in great undertakings or have any glorious achievements. God only hopes people pursue the truth and submit to His sovereignty and arrangements, and fulfill their duties in a down-to-earth manner. But I didn't understand God's will, and I didn't know myself. I always wanted status, and to be a lofty or mighty figure. Without status and attention, I felt I lived a depressed, useless life. I had no humanity or reason at all. I was clearly grass that wanted to be a tree, a finch that wanted to be an eagle, and as a result I strained until I was miserable and exhausted. Realizing this, I prayed to God, “God! In the past, I always pursued status, name, and gain. I always wanted to be admired and

praised. I wasn't content to perform my duty in obscurity, which You loathe and detest. Now I understand that this is the wrong way. I wish to submit to Your sovereignty and arrangements. Regardless of whether I can be promoted in the future, I will pursue the truth in a down-to-earth manner and perform my duty well." After I prayed, I felt a great sense of release, and I felt closer to God.

Later, through reading God's word, I gained some knowledge of my mistaken views on pursuit. God's words say: **"When someone is promoted to serve as a leader or worker, or they are cultivated to be the supervisor for some sort of technical work, this is nothing more than God's house entrusting them with a burden. It is a commission, a responsibility, and of course, it is also a special duty, an extraordinary opportunity; it is an exceptional elevation, and this person has nothing to brag about. When someone is promoted and cultivated by God's house, it does not mean they have a special position or status in God's house, so that they can enjoy special treatment and favor. Instead, after they have been exceptionally exalted by God's house, they are given excellent conditions to receive training from God's house, to practice doing some substantial church work, and at the same time God's house will have higher required standards for this person, which is very beneficial for their life entry. When a person is promoted and cultivated in God's house, it means they will be put under strict requirements and tightly supervised. God's house will strictly inspect and supervise the work they do, and will get to understand and give attention to their life entry. From these points of view, do the people promoted and cultivated by God's house enjoy special treatment, special status, and special position? Absolutely not, and even less do they enjoy any special identity. For people who have been promoted**

and cultivated, if they feel that they have capital as a result of performing their duty somewhat effectively, and so stagnate and stop pursuing the truth, then they are in danger when they encounter trials and tribulations. If people's stature is too small, they will likely be incapable of standing firm. Some say, 'If someone is promoted and cultivated as a leader, then they have an identity. Even if they are not one of the firstborn sons, they at least have hope of becoming one of God's people. I have never been promoted or cultivated, so what hope do I have of counting as one of God's people?' It is wrong to think this way. To become one of God's people, you must have life experience, and you must be someone who obeys God. No matter if you are a leader, worker, or an ordinary follower, anyone who possesses the truth realities is one of God's people. Even if you are a leader or worker, if you lack the truth realities, you are still a service-doer" (The Word, Vol. 5.

The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (5)). I understood from God's word that promotion and cultivation in the church does not mean people have a special status, or they receive special treatment like officials in the world. It's simply an opportunity to practice. It's only a greater responsibility for people. Being promoted and cultivated only means a person is switching from one duty to another. It does not mean that a person's identity and status are higher than others, and moreover, it doesn't mean they understand the truth or possess its realities. Not being promoted doesn't mean you are inferior, and it doesn't mean you have no future and cannot be saved. In short, no matter what duty you perform, whether or not you are promoted, God treats all people fairly, and each person is given a chance to practice in their duty. The church arranges duties reasonably according to each person's caliber and strengths, so that each person's caliber and strengths can be used to their fullest. This benefits

both the work of the church and our personal life entry. Whether or not you are promoted to an important duty, God's expectations for people and the provision for everyone are the same. God wants people to pursue the truth and change their dispositions in the course of their duties. Therefore, God's salvation for people never depends on their status or qualifications. Rather, it depends on people's attitude toward truth and their duty. If you walk the path of pursuing the truth, as you perform your duty, you can get more practice, and you will keep making progress in life. If you don't pursue the truth, no matter how high your status, you won't last. Sooner or later, you will be dismissed and cast out. I didn't have a pure understanding of promotion in the past. I always thought being promoted meant getting status, and the higher my status, the better my future and fate. As a result, I didn't focus on pursuing the truth in my duty, and I solely pursued status. Only now do I realize this view of things is absurd! In reality, the church gave me the chance to practice, but my caliber was just too low for more important tasks. But I had no self-awareness, so I always felt like I was capable and could be promoted to do more important work. I really didn't know myself at all. No matter what work we do in God's house, we all need to understand the truth and enter the truth principles for our work to achieve good results. But I didn't understand the truth, and I couldn't do any practical work at all. Even if I was promoted, what good could I possibly do? Wouldn't I just get in the way? Never mind that I would be utterly exhausted, I would also hinder the work of the church. That would not be worth it. At this point, I finally realized that my current duty was very suitable for me. I was capable of it, and it made use of my strengths. This was helpful for my own life entry, and beneficial to the work of the church. Through the enlightenment and guidance of God's words, I became aware

of God's will, I found my own place, I knew what duty I should be doing, and my negative state was turned around.

After that, I was much less controlled by name, gain, and status, and I bore a burden in my duty. When I was not busy with work, I used my spare time to practice preaching the gospel and testifying about God. When I saw people who truly believe in God and thirst for the truth accept the work of Almighty God in the last days, I felt a great sense of ease and comfort. Finally, I understood that it doesn't matter how important a position you are put into, what matters is whether you can play the role of a created being as you perform your duty. This is the most important thing. Now, although I often hear news that some brothers and sisters I know are promoted, I am much calmer, and I am no longer jealous as I was before, because I know that although we perform different duties, we all strive for the same goal, and we do our utmost to spread God's gospel of kingdom. Now, I have finally found my place. I am only a small created being. My duty is to obey the Creator's orchestrations and arrangements. In the future, no matter what my duty is, I am willing to accept, obey, and do my best in my duty to satisfy God.

56. How Did My Duty Become Transactional?

By Zhencheng, China

In 2008, I received the work of Almighty God in the last days. By reading the word of God I understood that the purpose of God's incarnation in the last days and His expression of the truth is to thoroughly cleanse humanity, to save people from sin, and to bring them into a beautiful destination. I was so excited and wanted to expend myself in the performance of a duty for God. Before long a church leader arranged for me to water newcomers and take charge of a few gathering groups. In order to perform my duty well, I shut down the clinic I had been running for many years and spent my days working in the church. Later, due to the arrests and persecution carried out by the Communist Party, my husband divorced me. In those years, I was always performing my duty away from home, and though I felt weak at times, as soon as I thought that the suffering I endured was commemorated by God, I gained faith and strength.

In April of 2017, the church leader considered my high blood pressure and poor physical condition and stopped me from doing my duty for a while so that I could get some rest. I was really upset and thought, "God's about to wrap up His work, so now is the crucial time to do my duty and prepare good deeds. Without a duty to perform, can I have a good destination and outcome? If I don't receive a blessing in the end, will all these years of hard work, of paying a price be for nothing?" Later, a sister took me in. She fellowshiped with me on God's will and helped me, but I was really envious when I saw her always busy with her duty. I couldn't do a duty because I wasn't well. Was God using my condition to take away the qualification of my duty, was He trying to expose me and cast me out? This thought left me limp all over, and I felt absolutely miserable and devoid of hope.

Misunderstandings and complaints about God also surfaced; I thought of how over these last few years, I had given up everything and suffered so much without a single complaint. How could I have ended up like this? At that time, I couldn't really take in God's words and I didn't know what to say to God in prayer. I lost my appetite and couldn't sleep properly. My heart was full of darkness. Seeing me like this, the sister dealt with me, saying, "You're not really reading God's words, totally like a different person now. You're not seeking the truth." Being dealt with in this way was really hard for me to hear, and I prayed to God in my seeking: "God, I don't know how to handle this situation, I don't understand Your will, and I don't know what path I should take. I'm living in darkness and I'm truly miserable. Please enlighten and guide me."

I kept praying and seeking a lot over the next few days. One morning, a phrase from God's words suddenly popped into my mind: **"Do you have the face of one who could gain blessings?"** I quickly turned on my computer to find this passage. Almighty God says: **"After several thousand years of corruption, man is numb and dull-witted; he has become a demon that opposes God, to the extent that man's rebelliousness toward God has been documented in the books of history, and even man himself is incapable of giving a full account of his rebellious behavior—for man has been profoundly corrupted by Satan, and has been led astray by Satan such that he knows not where to turn. Even today, man still betrays God: When man sees God, he betrays Him, and when he cannot see God, so too does he betray Him. There are even those who, having witnessed God's curses and God's wrath, still betray Him. And so I say that man's sense has lost its original function, and that man's conscience, too, has lost its original function. The man that I look upon is a beast in human attire, he is a**

venomous snake, and no matter how pitiable he tries to appear before My eyes, I will never be merciful toward him, for man has no grasp of the difference between black and white, of the difference between truth and non-truth. Man's sense is so benumbed, yet still he wishes to gain blessings; his humanity is so ignoble yet still he wishes to possess the sovereignty of a king. Who could he be the king of, with sense such as that? How could he with such a humanity sit atop a throne? Man truly has no shame! He is a conceited wretch! For those of you who wish to gain blessings, I suggest you first find a mirror and look at your own ugly reflection—do you have what it takes to be a king? Do you have the face of one who could gain blessings? There has not been the slightest change in your disposition and you have not put any of the truth into practice, yet still you wish for a wonderful tomorrow. You are deluding yourself!” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God). I also read another passage of God's word: **“People believe in God in order to be blessed, to be rewarded, to be crowned. Doesn't this exist in everyone's heart? It is a fact that it does. Although people don't often talk about it, and even cover up their motive and desire to obtain blessings, this desire and motive deep in people's hearts has always been unshakable. No matter how much spiritual theory people understand, what experience or knowledge they have, what duty they can perform, how much suffering they endure, or how much of a price they pay, they never let go of the motivation for blessings hidden deep in their hearts, and always silently labor in its service. Isn't this the thing buried deepest inside people's hearts? Without this motivation to receive blessings, how would you feel? With what attitude would you perform your duty and follow God? What would become of people if this motivation to receive blessings that is**

hidden in their hearts was gotten rid of? It is possible that many people would become negative, while some would become demotivated in their duties. They would lose interest in their belief in God, as if their soul had vanished. They would appear as if their heart had been snatched away. This is why I say the motivation for blessings is something hidden deep in people's hearts. Perhaps, as they perform their duty or live the life of the church, they feel that they are able to forsake their families and gladly expend themselves for God, and that they now have knowledge of their motivation to receive blessings, and have put this motivation aside, and are no longer governed or constrained by it. Then, they think that they no longer have the motivation to be blessed, but God believes otherwise. People only view matters superficially. Without trials, they feel good about themselves. As long as they don't leave the church or deny God's name, and they persist in expending for God, they believe they have changed. They feel they are no longer driven by personal enthusiasm or momentary impulses in the performance of their duty. Instead, they believe they can pursue the truth, and that they can continuously seek and practice the truth while performing their duty, so that their corrupt dispositions are purified and they achieve some genuine change. However, when things happen that are directly related to people's destination and ending, how do they behave? The truth is revealed in its entirety" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). God's words of judgment left me nowhere to hide. Before, I knew in theory that faith in God couldn't be for blessings, but I didn't truly know myself. This situation suddenly laid bare my motivation to obtain blessings. I had given up my home and job over those last few years to carry out my duty no matter what. I thought by paying all these prices I would certainly gain God's approval and blessings,

and that I would have a good destination, so I was really motivated in my duty. Now I couldn't do my duty because of my health, so I thought I'd lost my destination and my dreams of blessings were dashed. Not only did I regret giving everything up, but I blamed God, reasoned with Him and opposed Him. I was too depressed to move. I treated my sacrifices as capital to trade with God for blessings, thinking that my suffering and contributions meant God owed me a good destination and outcome. Without that, I complained and blamed God. The motive to be blessed was hidden behind my negativity. That perspective in my faith was conducting a transaction with God, and using Him to gain blessings. This was cheating God and resisting Him. Paul's contributions and expenditures were done to strike a deal with God, and demand a crown of righteousness from Him. This seriously offended God's disposition and he was punished. After I made some sacrifices and expenditures, I also demanded rewards, promises, and blessings from God. When I didn't get what I hoped for, I misunderstood and blamed God, and even thought about betraying Him. How was I any different from Paul? Did I have even a shred of reason or conscience? I'd expended some time and paid somewhat of a price in my duty, but because I didn't understand the truth principles, and was still filled with corruption and impurities, I was unable to achieve any good results in my duty, and I was even disruptive at times. In this way I was using my contributions and expenditures as capital to attempt to strike deals with God and obtain blessings. I was so unthinkably shameless! If my health hadn't kept me from doing my duty, I never would have seen the improper pursuit of blessings in my faith, and would have kept on going down the wrong path, ultimately ending up just like Paul. These thoughts left me with a lingering fear, and I realized that God's arranging this situation was His love and salvation for me! I was full of regret and self-reproachment once

I'd understood God's will, and in tears, I prayed, "Oh God! I'm so grateful for Your salvation. Without being exposed this way, I would have opposed You without knowing why. God, I wish to repent to You and stop pursuing blessings. I only want to pursue the truth, cast off my corrupt disposition, and live out a human likeness."

After praying, I read more of God's words, which discussed Peter's experiences of refinement. God's words say: **"I subjected him to countless trials—trials, naturally, that left him half-dead—but amidst these hundreds of trials, he never once lost faith in Me or felt disappointed in Me. Even when I said I had forsaken him, still he was not discouraged, and continued to love Me in a practical way and in accordance with past principles of practice. I told him that I would not praise him even though he loved Me, that I would ultimately cast him into Satan's hands. But amid such trials, trials that did not come upon his flesh, but were of words, he still prayed to Me and said, 'O God! Among heaven and earth and all things, is there any human, any creature, or any thing that is not in the hands of You, the Almighty? When You are merciful toward me, my heart greatly rejoices with Your mercy. When You judge me, unworthy though I may be, I gain a greater sense of the unfathomableness of Your deeds, because You are filled with authority and wisdom. Though my flesh suffers hardship, my spirit is comforted. How could I not give praise to Your wisdom and deeds? Even if I were to die after knowing You, how could I not do so gladly and happily? Almighty One! Do You really not wish to let me see You? Am I really unfit to receive Your judgment? Could it be that there is something in me You do not wish to see?'" During such trials, even though Peter was not able to accurately grasp My will, it was evident that he was proud and honored to be used by Me (even though he received My judgment**

so that humanity might see My majesty and wrath), and that he was not distressed by these trials. Because of his loyalty before Me, and because of My blessing of him, he has been an exemplar and model to man for thousands of years. Is this not precisely what you should emulate?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 6). I saw in God’s words that Peter wasn’t constrained by his fate or destination. Even when God said He wouldn’t approve of Peter in spite of his love and would ultimately deliver him to Satan, Peter still pursued loving God and submitted until his death. There wasn’t anything transactional or impure in Peter’s love for God. It was true love and obedience. I found a path of practice from God’s words and became willing to seek to love God like Peter. No matter how God treats me, whether I have an outcome or destination, I will submit to God’s rule and arrangements. Though at that time I wasn’t able to do my duty in the church like before, I’d been enjoying the sustenance of God’s words over those last few years and had some experience, so I could write out what I’d experienced from God’s work to bear witness for Him. This is also doing a created being’s duty. After this, I started quieting myself before God a lot, pondering His words and writing experience testimonials. I felt much closer to God and stopped fretting over my future and prospects. I felt a great sense of release and relaxation. After a period of recuperation, my blood pressure basically normalized, and I resumed doing my duty in the church.

I thought that after that experience I had gained some understanding about my views of belief in God, and that I wouldn’t be constrained by hopes for blessings anymore. But after a little while, the desire for blessings reared its head again.

At that time, I served as church leader. In a gathering, our leader asked us to check each of the group leaders’ ability to do practical work and told

us that absolutely no devious people, or people who wouldn't accept the truth could be chosen for that position. After hearing this I figured I had to do this right away, that using the wrong person could harm the church's work and the brothers and sisters. In this case, not only could I be dismissed, but this would be a transgression and an evil deed. A month later, the required personnel changes had been made, and I felt very happy. But surprisingly, our leader soon found that one of my choices was a devious person. This was very upsetting for me. I felt I hadn't done my duty well and that I had disrupted the church's work. Soon after, some brothers and sisters reported that another of my choices had a very arrogant disposition. He was authoritarian in his duties, didn't accept the suggestions of others, and that he scolded and constrained the brothers and sisters. Seeing problem after problem crop up in the work, I suddenly felt paralyzed. I felt like I had a shallow understanding of the truth, that I lacked the truth reality. If something else went wrong and impacted the church's work, that would be such a great evil. Then wouldn't my future and destination be done for? I felt like I should switch duty right away. I started feeling dizzy one morning, and saw my blood pressure was much higher than usual. I told my leader about my physical condition, thinking that since my health problem had come up, it would be great if she switched my duty. Then I wouldn't have as much responsibility. I said to the sister who worked with me, "If I am made to go back home, I am willing to obey, and I'll do whatever duty I can after that." After I said this, the sister dealt with me, saying I was displaying negativity and that I should reflect on myself. I didn't want to accept this. I thought I was able to obey and willing to do whatever duty I could. How was that displaying negativity? But then I figured God had allowed her to say that, so I prayed to God for His guidance so I could know my state.

Then I read this passage of God's words: **"No matter how they are tried, the allegiance of those who have God in their heart remains unchanged; but for those who do not have God in their heart, once the work of God is not advantageous to their flesh, they change their view of God, and even depart from God. Such are those who will not stand fast in the end, who only seek God's blessings and have no desire to expend themselves for God and dedicate themselves to Him. Such base people will all be expelled when God's work comes to an end, and they are unworthy of any sympathy. Those without humanity are incapable of truly loving God. When the environment is safe and secure, or there are profits to be made, they are totally obedient toward God, but once that which they desire is compromised or finally refuted, they immediately revolt. Even in the space of just one night, they may go from a smiling, 'kind-hearted' person to an ugly-looking and ferocious killer, suddenly treating their benefactor of yesterday as their mortal enemy, without rhyme or reason. If these demons are not cast out, these demons that would kill without blinking an eye, will they not become a hidden danger?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Work and Man's Practice). God's words of judgment and revelation made me feel ashamed. Wasn't I exactly the type of person He was revealing? I was enthusiastic and worked hard when I thought my duty would yield blessings. Otherwise, I'd suddenly become hostile and not want to do the duty anymore. I was thinking only of my future and destination. When I made mistakes in my duty, I didn't reflect or seek the truth in light of my failures, or make up for my flaws, or strive to do my best in my duty; rather, I was afraid of having responsibility and endangering my future. I wanted to shirk this duty and swap it for one with less responsibility, using my blood

pressure as an excuse to do so. I looked reasonable on the outside, but my despicable motives were hidden behind that. I was so devious!

I started reflecting on what the true root of my constant pursuit of blessings in my faith. I read this in God's words: **"All corrupt humans live for themselves. Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost—this is the summation of human nature. People believe in God for their own sake; when they forsake things and expend themselves for God, it is in order to be blessed, and when they are faithful to Him, it is in order to be rewarded. In sum, it is all done for the purpose of being blessed, rewarded, and entering the kingdom of heaven. In society, people work for their own benefit, and in the house of God, they perform a duty in order to be blessed. It is for the sake of gaining blessings that people forsake everything and can withstand much suffering: There is no better evidence of man's satanic nature"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). I learned from these words of God that I was always thinking of my future and destination because I'd been so deeply corrupted by Satan. "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost" and "Never lift a finger without a reward," these satanic laws of survival had long since become my nature, making me ever more selfish, despicable, and self-serving. I thought about personal gain in everything I did. Looking at my path in faith over those years, my starting point for doing my duty had been being blessed, being rewarded, ultimately getting a good destination by entering into the kingdom of heaven. My many years of hard work and suffering weren't sincere expenditure for God, or doing a created being's duty. It was all to use God, to cheat Him, to strike a deal with Him. It wasn't to love or satisfy God at all. How could I be called a person of faith? Being able to train as a leader was thanks to God's grace—God's will was to have me practice using the truth to resolve

problems and learn discernment and insight, but I didn't treasure this chance. I didn't equip myself with the truth and enter into it, and only thought about my future and fate. I was walking the path of an enemy of God. I knew I had to repent and pursue the truth, or else I'd certainly end up destroyed.

I read these words of God in one of my devotionals: **“The only reason that the incarnate God has come into the flesh is because of the needs of corrupt man. It is because of the needs of man, not of God, and all His sacrifices and sufferings are for the sake of mankind, and not for the benefit of God Himself. There are no pros and cons or rewards for God; He shall not reap some future harvest, but that which was originally owed to Him. All that He does and sacrifices for mankind is not so that He might gain great rewards, but purely for the sake of mankind”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Corrupt Mankind Is More in Need of the Salvation of the Incarnate God). I was very deeply moved by God's love when I pondered this. God—supreme, holy, and honorable—has become flesh twice to save deeply corrupted mankind, suffering terrible humiliation and pain. The Lord Jesus was crucified to redeem mankind, paying the price of His life. Almighty God came to China in the last days, expressing truths to cleanse and save mankind, and has been persecuted, hunted, and slandered by the CCP and the religious world. He suffers everything to work in our midst, to give us His words for nothing in return, just to save us from Satan's influence. God pays such great prices to save mankind, without ever considering His own gains or losses. He doesn't require anything from us in return, He demands nothing from us. God's love is selfless and true. God's essence is so beautiful and good! Then, looking at me, I had said I had faith and that I wanted to please God, but I wasn't sincere toward Him at all. I waved the flag of expending for Him, just to

attempt to conduct a transaction for blessings. This was using and cheating God. I saw how selfish, devious, debased, and shameful I was. A person like me would never gain God's approval, no matter how great their sacrifice. I also read this in God's words: **"As a creature of God, man should seek to perform the duty of a creature of God, and seek to love God without making other choices, for God is worthy of man's love. Those who seek to love God should not seek any personal benefits or seek that which they personally long for; this is the most correct means of pursuit"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). I saw in God's words that as created beings, we shouldn't have faith for the sake of blessings. We should pursue love for God and seek to do our duty properly as created beings. This is the most meaningful way of living. I said this prayer to God: "God, I want to repent to You, to stop seeking blessings. No matter my final destination, I just want to do my duty well to repay Your love." Once I'd corrected my state, my blood pressure stabilized.

Later, I also read a couple of passages of God's words: **"There is no correlation between the duty of man and whether he is blessed or cursed. Duty is what man ought to fulfill; it is his heaven-sent vocation, and should not depend on recompense, conditions, or reasons. Only then is he doing his duty. To be blessed is when someone is made perfect and enjoys God's blessings after experiencing judgment. To be cursed is when someone's disposition does not change after they have experienced chastisement and judgment, it is when they do not experience being made perfect but are punished. But regardless of whether they are blessed or cursed, created beings should fulfill their duty, doing what they ought to do, and doing what they are able to do; this is the least that a person, a person who pursues God, should do.**

You should not do your duty only to be blessed, and you should not refuse to act for fear of being cursed. Let Me tell you this one thing: Man's performance of his duty is what he ought to do, and if he is incapable of performing his duty, then this is his rebelliousness. It is through the process of doing his duty that man is gradually changed, and it is through this process that he demonstrates his loyalty. As such, the more you are able to do your duty, the more truth you shall receive, and the more real your expression shall become" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). **"Ultimately, whether people can attain salvation is not dependent on what duty they fulfill, but on whether they can understand and gain the truth, and on whether they can, in the end, entirely submit to God, put themselves at the mercy of His arrangement, give no consideration to their future and destiny, and become a qualified created being. God is righteous and holy, and these are the standards He uses to measure all mankind. These standards are immutable, and you must remember this. Inscribe these standards in your mind, and at any time, do not think of finding some other path to pursue some unreal thing. The requirements and standards God has for all who want to attain salvation are forever unchanging. They remain the same no matter who you are"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). These words of God helped me understand that our duty has nothing to do with whether we're blessed or cursed in the end. The key to being fully saved is whether we can pursue and gain the truth, and can change our dispositions. What duty I perform and when I perform it are both determined by God, and my outcome and destination are even more subject to God's rule and arrangements. What I should do is accept God's orchestrations and devotedly perform my duty. I also realized that my

serving as church leader is God's exaltation, and is God giving me a chance to practice, allowing me to see my shortcomings and insufficiencies over the course of my duties. Seeking the truth and understanding the truth principles in all aspects could spur on my growth in life. In understanding this, I stopped feeling constrained about my future and my fate and didn't want to switch duties anymore. I was able to submit and perform my duties in a grounded way, seeking the truth to resolve whatever problems arose. Over time, I slowly grasped some principles, and I gradually made fewer mistakes in my duty. Practicing in accordance with God's words and not performing my duties for the sake of blessings was really freeing for me. My duties have been guided by God, and have had better and better results. Thanks be to the salvation of Almighty God!

57. Pursue the Truth Even More in Old Age

By Jinru, China

I was born into a Christian home, and I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days when I was 60. I felt so lucky to be able to welcome the Lord in the last days and accept God's end-time work, and that my dream of being saved and entering the kingdom would soon be realized. So long as I worked hard in my duty and made sacrifices, I'd have the chance to receive God's salvation. After that, I put my all into any duty that the church arranged for me, and even by 70, I was still able to ride my bike around and do some errands for the church. I'd run up and down the stairs doing my duty, never feeling tired. I was happy I could still perform a duty. As I kept getting older, my bodily functions were impacted by aging and I wasn't physically the same. Considering my health, the church assigned me to hosting duties at home. I was kind of disappointed. As I continued aging, my eyesight declined, and I couldn't ride my bike to do a duty anymore. All I could do was take on hosting duty. If I couldn't do any duties at all as I kept getting older, could I still be saved? I thought of how great it would be if I were a few years younger, and I really envied the younger brothers and sisters who could travel around working for God.

In March 2022, the church leader arranged for me to go support Sister Yu Xin. She was 78 and having a hard time getting around because of her health, and she couldn't perform any duty at all. Seeing the state she was in left me feeling sad and distressed. I was already over 80, even older than Sister Yu Xin, my health wasn't what it used to be, and I didn't know if one day I'd also get sick and be unable to do a duty, and what use would I be then? Would I have hope for salvation if I couldn't do any duties? I felt more upset the more I thought about it. Then I got sick, too. Once, I felt

dizzy when I got up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom, and by the morning, I couldn't get out of bed. I was so dazed that I couldn't even open my eyes. I was vomiting and had diarrhea, and couldn't even keep water down. My husband called our daughter to have her come take care of me, and after two days, I finally started to recover. I wasn't held up in my duty, but I was really weak and didn't have the energy to do anything. I couldn't keep food down, and I felt dazed and nauseous. I was worried, as an old person, with my health declining by the day, if I got sick like that again, would I be able to recover that quickly? If I didn't get better within short order and needed someone to care for me, I wouldn't be able to perform any duty, and wouldn't that make me useless? Could I get into the kingdom without a duty? How great it would be to be a few years younger, as I was 20 years ago when I'd just accepted this stage of work, unafraid to do anything. Whatever the church assigned to me, near or far, I could get it done. With a duty, I had more hope of being blessed. But I couldn't turn back the clock and wasn't fit for anything. So I just muddled through the days. Before I knew it, I was living in a state of negativity and misunderstanding. My state kept declining. I lost the heart to read God's words and I didn't have the drive to do anything. I wasn't putting my heart into my duty like before. I prayed to God, "God! I feel like now that I'm older and I can't do many duties, there's no hope for me to enter the kingdom and be saved. I'm really down. Oh God, please give me faith and guide me so that I'm not held back by old age and I can understand Your will and come out from this state."

My state started to turn around when I read some of God's words. Almighty God says: **"There are also elderly people among brothers and sisters, who are aged from 60 up to around 80 or 90 and who, because of their advanced age, also experience some difficulties. Despite their**

age, their thinking is not necessarily so correct or rational, and their ideas and views do not necessarily accord with the truth. These elderly people have problems just the same, and they're always worrying, 'My health isn't so good anymore and I'm limited as to what duty I can perform. If I just perform this little duty, will God remember me? Sometimes I get sick, and I need someone to look after me. When there's no one to look after me, I'm not able to perform my duty, so what can I do? I'm old and I don't remember God's words when I read them and it's hard for me to understand the truth. When fellowshiping on the truth, I speak in a muddled and illogical way, and I haven't any experiences worth sharing. I'm old and I don't have enough energy, my eyesight isn't very good and I'm not strong anymore. Everything is difficult for me. Not only can I not perform my duty, but I easily forget things and get things wrong. Sometimes I get confused and I cause problems for the church and for my brothers and sisters. I want to attain salvation and pursue the truth but it's very hard. What can I do?' ... In particular, there are some elderly people who want to spend all their time expending themselves for God and performing their duty, but they're physically unwell. Some have high blood pressure, some have high blood sugar, some have gastrointestinal problems, and their physical strength cannot keep up with the demands of their duty, and so they fret. They see young people able to eat and drink, to run and jump, and they feel envious. The more they see young people do such things, the more distressed they feel, thinking, 'I want to do my duty well and pursue and understand the truth, and I want to practice the truth, too, so why is it so hard? I'm so old and useless! Does God not want old people? Are old people really useless? Can we not attain salvation?' They're sad and unable to feel happy no matter how they

think about it. They don't want to miss such a wonderful time and such a great opportunity, yet they're unable to expend themselves and perform their duty with all their heart and soul like young people do. These elderly people fall into deep distress, anxiety, and worry because of their age. Every time they encounter some difficulty, setback, hardship, or obstacle, they blame their age, and even hate themselves and have no liking for themselves. But in any case, it is to no avail, there is no solution, and they have no way forward. Could it be that they really have no way forward? Is there any solution? (Elderly people should also perform their duties as much as they're able.) It's acceptable for elderly people to perform their duties as much as they're able, right? Can elderly people not pursue the truth anymore because of their age? Are they not capable of understanding the truth? (Yes, they are.) Can elderly people understand the truth? They can understand some, and not even young people can understand it all, either. Elderly people always have a misconception, believing that they're confused, that their memory is bad, and so they can't understand the truth. Are they right? (No.) Although young people have much more energy than elderly people, and are physically stronger, actually their capacity to understand, comprehend, and know is just the same as that of elderly people. Weren't elderly people once young as well? They weren't born old, and young people will all grow old one day, too. Elderly people mustn't always be thinking that because they're old, physically weak, unwell, and with bad memories, they're different from young people. In fact, there is no difference. What do I mean when I say there is no difference? Whether someone is old or young, their corrupt dispositions are the same, their attitudes and views on all manner of things are the same, and their perspectives and standpoints on all

manner of things are the same. So, elderly people mustn't think that because they're old, with fewer extravagant desires than young people, and able to be stable, they have no wild ambitions or desires, and that they have fewer corrupt dispositions—this is a misconception. Young people can jockey for position, so can't elderly people jockey for position? Young people can do things against the principles and act arbitrarily, so can't elderly people do the same? (Yes, they can.) Young people can be arrogant, so can't elderly people also be arrogant? However, when elderly people are arrogant, due to their advanced age they aren't so aggressive, and it's not such a high-minded arrogance. Young people show more obvious manifestations of arrogance due to their flexible limbs and minds, while older people show less obvious manifestations of arrogance due to their rigid limbs and inflexible minds. However, their essence of arrogance and their corrupt dispositions are the same. No matter how long an elderly person has believed in God, or how many years they have performed their duty, if they are not in pursuit of the truth, then their corrupt dispositions will remain. ... So, it is not that elderly people have nothing to do, nor are they unable to perform their duties, much less are they unable to pursue the truth—there are many things for them to do. The various heresies and fallacies that you have accumulated during your lifetime, as well as the various traditional ideas and notions, ignorant and stubborn things, conservative things, irrational things, and absurd things that you have accumulated have all piled up in your heart, and you should spend even more time than young people to dig out, dissect, and recognize these things. It's not the case that you have nothing to do, or that you should feel distressed, anxious, and worried when you are at a loose end—this is neither your task nor your responsibility. First of

all, elderly people should have the correct mindset. Although you may be getting on in years and you are relatively aged physically, still you should have a young mindset. Although you're getting old, your thinking is slowed and your memory is poor, if you can still know yourself, still understand the words I say, and still understand the truth, then that proves you are not old and that your caliber is not lacking. If someone is in their 70s but is not able to understand the truth, then this shows that their stature is too small and not up to the task. Therefore, age is irrelevant when it comes to the truth" (The Word,

Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). I read that passage quite a few times. God's words really did go straight to the heart of me, revealing my precise state. I saw that I was old now and not in the same condition, so I couldn't keep running about doing a duty, and could just be a host at home. And when I saw Sister Yu Xin's condition, at home, unable to do a duty, I really worried about my age, that if one day I really couldn't get around or do a duty, I couldn't be saved. The thought of not getting into the kingdom was really painful and upsetting for me, and it made me worry about my destination. I lived in a negative, pessimistic state, and lost my drive to do anything. Reading God's words moved me and brightened my heart. It's not like old people don't have any options and can't be saved, that we can't do anything or take on a duty. Old age doesn't mean our heart is old, and that there isn't anything we can do. Older people can still do things just like before, reading God's words and praying when we should, and doing whatever duty we can do as usual. God has never said He doesn't approve of the elderly because they can't do as many duties. Also, both the old and young have corrupt dispositions, and we all need to seek the truth to resolve them. Particularly for older people like me, through a life at home, school, and out in society, we have built up all sorts of thoughts, notions,

and philosophies on life. So many of these satanic philosophies, heresies and fallacies had piled up in my head. I'd been a believer for years, but these satanic poisons were still entrenched in me and had become my rules for survival. Sometimes when I was in a gathering with others, I noticed someone living in an incorrect state or spreading negativity. I saw very clearly that what they said to the others wasn't edifying, but I kept my mouth shut to protect my interpersonal relationships. I lived by the satanic philosophy, "Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship." I was unwilling to practice the truth, reluctant to cause offense. And in gatherings, when we talked about some figures and stories from the Bible, some brothers and sisters didn't understand it, and I displayed an arrogant disposition. I felt that as an old Christian, I knew more than they did, so I'd go on and on explaining it to them, using that as capital to show off. With so many corrupt dispositions that hadn't been resolved, I should have felt more urgency and put effort into pursuing the truth. I should seek the truth more in my remaining years to resolve my corruption. There are so many things I should do and truths I should enter into. However, I always envied young people for having good health and lots of possible duties, thinking they had more hope of salvation. Now that I couldn't get around and my duties were limited, I worried I wouldn't have a place in the kingdom. I sank into a negative state I couldn't get out of. Thinking of it now, that was so foolish. I needed to have a proper attitude. Though I'm older and my flesh is aging, I can still understand God's words, and I still have normal sense and reason, so I can't waste any time in pursuing the truth, and I can't keep living in distress and anxiety. This really comes through in this passage of God's words: **"Although you're getting old, your thinking is slowed and your memory is poor, if you can still know yourself, still understand the words I say, and still understand the**

truth, then that proves you are not old and that your caliber is not lacking” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). God’s words brightened my heart, and I felt immediately that I had something to strive for. God says I am not old, so I should pursue the truth diligently in my remaining years even more.

I also read this in God’s words: **“I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). **“God’s wish is for every person to be made perfect, to be ultimately gained by Him, to be completely cleansed by Him, and to become people He loves. It matters not whether I say you are backward or of poor caliber—this is all fact. My saying this does not prove that I intend to forsake you, that I have lost hope in you, much less that I am unwilling to save you. Today I have come to do the work of your salvation, which is to say that the work I do is a continuation of the work of salvation. Every person has the chance to be made perfect: Provided that you are willing, provided that you pursue, in the end you will be able to achieve this result, and not one of you will be forsaken. If you are of poor caliber, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your poor caliber; if you are of high caliber, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your high caliber; if you are ignorant and illiterate, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your illiteracy; if you are literate, My requirements of you will be in accordance with the fact that you are literate; if you are elderly, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your age; if you are capable of providing hospitality, My requirements of you will be in accordance with this**

capability; if you say you cannot offer hospitality, and can only perform a certain function, whether it be spreading the gospel, or taking care of the church, or attending to other general affairs, My perfection of you will be in accordance with the function that you perform. Being loyal, obeying to the very end, and seeking to have supreme love for God—this is what you must accomplish, and there are no better practices than these three things” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance

and Work of God. Restoring the Normal Life of Man and Taking Him to a Wonderful Destination). I was really moved by these words from God. God has never determined someone’s outcome based on their caliber, age, or how many duties they’ve done. God just looks at whether people are devoted and obedient toward Him. So long as someone is resolved to pursue the truth, and they have true faith and love the truth, God won’t abandon them. I saw that God is righteous, and that His requirements aren’t one-size-fits-all. He makes demands of people based on their stature and what they’re able to achieve. Those who can host should host, those who can preach the gospel should do that. People should do whatever duty they can. So long as we can pursue the truth and act based on God’s words, we have a chance at salvation. But I felt like at my advanced age, there wasn’t any duty I could do, and that God wouldn’t approve of me. I was thinking of God like a worldly boss who would keep you when you could work and had value, but would otherwise cast you out. This was a lack of fear of God. It was also me misunderstanding God’s will because of my mistaken notions and imaginings. Also, God has never said that older people can’t be saved or perfected. I thought back on the antichrists and evildoers expelled from the church. Some were younger than me and had given up their homes and jobs for their duties. They worked hard by human standards, but they didn’t pursue the truth and their corrupt dispositions didn’t change one bit. They

did things by their satanic natures, disrupting the work of God's house, never repenting, and were finally cast out by God. As for older members, some stay at home doing hosting duties, some keep the church's books, but they all play their role as they should. God doesn't turn His back on them or cast them out because of their old age or because they can't do as many duties. I saw that God casts people out because of their nature essence, not how old they are. Now that I'm old, I can't support the church the way I used to. I'm hosting others at my home. So I need to do my hosting duty well and maintain a safe environment for gatherings in my home, so that brothers and sisters can come and go in peace. That's devoting myself to my duty. My neighbor Sister Yu Xin is unwell and needs some support, so I should do whatever I can, meeting and fellowshiping with her. And whenever I encounter challenges or problems, I should pray and read God's words to solve them. If I can carry five pounds, I'll carry five pounds, and if I can carry 20, I'll carry 20. Do your absolute best, and do all you can do—that's most important. Once I understood that, I felt ashamed and humiliated. I hadn't understood God's will, and I wasn't looking at things or acting based on His words. Instead, I was living by my own mistaken views, misunderstanding God. I was truly rebellious.

I reflected on why I always worried about being old, unable to do a duty, and cast out. What motive was at work behind that? In my seeking, I read a couple passages in God's words: **"Some people become full of vigor as soon as they see that faith in God will bring them blessings, but then lose all energy as soon as they see that they have to suffer refinements. Is that believing in God? Ultimately, you must achieve complete and utter obedience before God in your faith. You believe in God but still have demands of Him, have many religious notions you cannot put down, personal interests you cannot let go of, and still you seek**

blessings of the flesh and want God to rescue your flesh, to save your soul—these are all behaviors of people who have the wrong perspective. Even though people with religious beliefs have faith in God, they do not seek to change their dispositions and do not pursue knowledge of God, but rather seek only the interests of their flesh. Many among you have faiths that belong in the category of religious convictions; this is not true faith in God. To believe in God, people must possess a heart that is prepared to suffer for Him and the will to give themselves up. Unless people meet these two conditions, their faith in God is not valid, and they will not be able to achieve change in their disposition. Only people who genuinely pursue the truth, seek knowledge of God, and pursue life are those who truly believe in God” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). “People believe in God in order to be blessed, to be rewarded, to be crowned. Doesn’t this exist in everyone’s heart? It is a fact that it does. Although people don’t often talk about it, and even cover up their motive and desire to obtain blessings, this desire and motive deep in people’s hearts has always been unshakable. No matter how much spiritual theory people understand, what experience or knowledge they have, what duty they can perform, how much suffering they endure, or how much of a price they pay, they never let go of the motivation for blessings hidden deep in their hearts, and always silently labor in its service. Isn’t this the thing buried deepest inside people’s hearts? Without this motivation to receive blessings, how would you feel? With what attitude would you perform your duty and follow God? What would become of people if this motivation to receive blessings that is hidden in their hearts was gotten rid of? It is possible that many people would become negative, while some would become demotivated in their duties. They

would lose interest in their belief in God, as if their soul had vanished. They would appear as if their heart had been snatched away. This is why I say the motivation for blessings is something hidden deep in people's hearts" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). What God reveals and judges in these words was precisely my state. God really does scrutinize man's hearts and minds. This exposed my deep-seated motives and hopes of being blessed, and that my faith was just for blessings. When I'd just accepted this stage of work, I was motivated by the chance to get into the kingdom. I was willing to do whatever the church wanted. I would do my duty, rain or shine. I thought that God would approve so long as I paid a price, and then I'd be saved and gain the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. But now that I saw I was getting old, all my bodily functions impacted by aging, and that I couldn't do duties I'd been able to do before, I was worried that someday I'd become ill and unable to do a duty. That made me feel sad and distressed. And when I thought of those two days that I was sick and immobile, I felt even more worried that if I got sick again and didn't get better quickly, I wouldn't be able to do any duty and I couldn't be saved. My heart felt empty, and I felt dark and depressed. I didn't have the drive to read God's words or pray, thinking I'd just muddle through each day. I really saw that I had a motive to be blessed hidden deep in my heart, firmly entrenched, and that I was always laboring and striving to achieve this goal. On the surface I was doing a duty and wanted to satisfy God, but in fact, I wanted to trade my duty for the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. I was working for my destination. I really am too evil and cunning by nature. I was born into a Christian home, and followed my parents, believing in the Lord Jesus since I was little. When I was 60 years old, I accepted God's work of the last days. I've already gained so much. God has clearly fellowshiped every

aspect of the truth in the last days, and through the judgment and chastisement of His word, I've gained some understanding of my own corrupt nature and satanic poisons, I'm able to despise myself, and my corrupt disposition has changed a bit. These are fruits borne of my experiences of the judgment and chastisement of God's words. This is such incredible grace from God! I've received such great salvation. Even if God were to take this very breath from me right now, I wouldn't have regrets, and I'd owe God my gratitude. But I'm still alive now, and I still have this breath. I should wholeheartedly pursue the truth and dispositional change. Whether I'm blessed or suffer disaster in the future, I should submit to God's rule and arrangements. This is the reason I should have as a created being. But after gaining so much sustenance from God's words, I still didn't know to repay Him for His love. I wanted to use my duty to make a trade with God for the kingdom's blessings. I became negative and misunderstood God when I thought I couldn't get that. I didn't have a conscience or reason. Where was my humanity? I was so selfish, despicable, and wretched. My motivations and perspectives in faith weren't right. I just wanted to get into the kingdom of heaven, and I only pursued fleshly gains and blessings. I was on the same path as Paul. I thought of how Paul accomplished so much, but he had faith just to be rewarded and crowned. He was using his work to make a deal with God, to exchange it for the blessings of heaven. He didn't seek to know God. He was on a path of resisting God. In the end, he was punished by God. My pursuit was the same as Paul's. I didn't pursue dispositional change to satisfy God, and I was just doing my duty for blessings. On the surface I was performing a duty, but in essence, I was cheating God. I wasn't a true believer. A true believer is someone who pursues the truth, who seeks to know and love God. There aren't any conditions or deals in how they do their duty. There

aren't any personal motives or goals, or extravagant desires. They put everything they have into satisfying God. Just like Peter—though he didn't do as much work as Paul, he was able to accept God's judgment and chastisement, know himself, and seek to know and love God. Ultimately, he submitted until the point of death, being crucified upside down for God, bearing witness to glorify God. With faith like mine, always holding on to vile motives and desires, I'd never gain God's approval no matter how many years I believed. I would only end up rejected and loathed by God. Without repenting, and remaining transactional in my faith and duty, I wouldn't gain the truth or have dispositional change in the end. I'd end up just like Paul, exposed and cast out by God.

I thought of what God said: **“There is no correlation between the duty of man and whether he is blessed or cursed. Duty is what man ought to fulfill; it is his heaven-sent vocation, and should not depend on recompense, conditions, or reasons. Only then is he doing his duty”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). At this point I realized that a duty is what a created being ought to do, and unrelated to receiving blessings or misfortune. As a member of God's house, I shouldn't have conditions for Him. I should fulfill my responsibilities. It's just like a family. When children do what they can for the family, can they really ask for monetary rewards from their parents? That wouldn't be a family member, but an employee. As a member of God's family, and as a created being, doing a bit of duty for the Creator is just what I should do, it's right and natural. I should show my devotion without thoughts of conditions or rewards. That's what I ought to do. I'm older now and my health isn't great, but God hasn't given up on me. He still sustains and guides me with His words. I can't be devoid of conscience, and I can't keep living in a negative state, abandoning myself to despair. I

should have a proper attitude, and while I'm in my right mind and still have my reason, read God's words more to know myself and pursue dispositional change, do whatever duty I'm able to do now, and submit to God's rule and arrangements. I read something else in God's words: **"Every person, no matter your caliber, or age, or the number of years you have believed in God, should put your efforts toward the path of pursuing the truth. You shouldn't emphasize any objective rationales; you should pursue the truth unconditionally. Don't idle your days away. If you seek and put your efforts toward the pursuit of the truth as the great matter of your life, it may be that the truth you gain and can reach in your pursuit is not what you'd have wished for. But if God says He will give you a destination depending on your attitude in your pursuit and your sincerity, then how wonderful that will be! Don't focus on what your destination or outcome will be for now. What will happen and what the future holds, whether you will be able to avoid disaster and not die—don't think of these things or ask after them. Concentrate only on pursuing the truth in God's words and His requirements, on performing your duty well, on satisfying God's will, on not proving unworthy of God's six thousand years of waiting, His six thousand years of anticipation. Give God some comfort; let Him see some hope for you, and let His wishes be realized in you. Tell Me, would God mistreat you if you did so? Of course not! And even if the end results aren't as one would have wished, how should they treat that fact, as a created being? They should submit in all things to God's orchestrations and arrangements, without any personal agenda. Is this not the perspective created beings should take? (It is.) That's the right mindset"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. Why Man Must Pursue the Truth). **"The pursuit of the truth is a great matter of human life. No other**

matter is as important as pursuing the truth, and no other matter surpasses gaining the truth in value. Has it been easy, to follow God up until today? Hurry, and make your pursuit of the truth a matter of import! This stage of work in the last days is the most important stage of work God does on people in His six-thousand-year management plan. The pursuit of the truth is the highest expectation God places on His chosen people. He hopes that people walk the correct path, which is the pursuit of the truth” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. Why Man Must Pursue the Truth).

I was really inspired when I read this, and really moved. God has told us all about His will, as well as what He requires and hopes for from people. He doesn't care how high or low our caliber is, how old we are, or how many duties we've performed, and He just cares whether we pursue the truth, are devoted in our faith, and are obedient. Just like in the Age of Grace, a widow offered up only two small coins, and yet she gained the approval of God because she offered everything she had to Him. God saw her sincerity. Even though I'm old now and I can't compare to young people in any aspect, I'm not negative. I want to forge ahead and seize every single day. While I still have my senses and reason, I really should be pursuing the truth more and reading God's words more, practicing every little thing I understand, and doing my best in my duty. Then when I die, my heart will be at peace, and I won't let God down for sustaining me throughout my life. God allowed me to be born in the last days. I was able to accept His work of the last days at the age of 60, to witness God's appearance, personally hear His voice, and experience the judgment and chastisement of His words; this was God's enormous grace and blessing for me. If I were still living stuck within the sadness of old age, with no urgency to seize hold of this chance to pursue the truth, I would miss out on the chance to experience God's work and be saved. If I wanted to pursue the

truth later on, my chance would be gone, and it would be too late for regrets. So I prayed to God, “Oh God! I’m ready to repent. I don’t want to live in a state of negativity, anxiety, and misunderstanding anymore. I want to put Your words into practice, do my utmost to pursue the truth while I’m alive, and take the right path in life. I want to practice all that I understand from Your words, do my duty, and satisfy Your will. Whether I’m blessed or suffer misfortune, I’m ready to submit to Your rule and arrangements.”

From then on, I’ve focused on reading God’s words and pondering them more. I put everything I have into whatever duty the church needs me to perform. I’ve gained some experience and knowledge from my years as a believer, and I’ve practiced writing articles to bear witness to God. Especially now those preaching the gospel need good articles to resolve religious people’s notions, and as a long-standing person of faith, I’d like to write some, to do what I can to spread the kingdom gospel. And moreover, as I have a pretty arrogant disposition and tend to constrain my family because of my arrogance, I’ve been seeking the truth to resolve this aspect of my corruption, and to live out normal humanity before my family. In my usual interactions with brothers and sisters, when I see someone doing something that goes against principles, if I’m afraid of saying something that could offend them or give them a bad impression of me, I pray to God that I won’t live by satanic philosophies, and I focus on practicing the truth, upholding the interests of the church, and not just being a people-pleaser. Now I’m training myself to practice the truth in every little thing, and I feel very at peace and full of joy. Being able to come out from distress, anxiety, and concern, is entirely thanks to God’s guidance and grace. I’m truly grateful to God! All the glory be to Almighty God!

58. A Government Official's Choice

By Xin Zheng, China

My dad broke the law and he was arrested before I was born. That kind of thing was really shameful in the Chinese countryside in the 1970s, so everyone looked down on my family. I grew up amidst the jeers of everyone around me. My mom would always tell me, “You have to work hard to excel. We can’t have other people looking down on our family.” Those words were instilled deep inside me. I swore that in the future, I’d stand out from the crowd and change everyone’s attitude toward us. I really threw myself into my studies and became a teacher after graduating from college. It was a guaranteed living, but still a far cry from my goal of truly excelling. And so, I relied on my connections and sent gifts to county-level leaders, hoping to be transferred to a government position.

Just as I’d hoped, I got a position as a secretary three years later in the town government office, which had me accompanying leaders for various occasions. It looked very distinguished. Especially when I went back to my hometown, the village head and all the people there were really warm toward me and lots of people were fawning on me—my family was benefiting from it too, and people from all over the whole area were really envious. My mom said to me happily, “Since you got a government job, wherever your brother goes he tells everyone who his brother is, where he works. After all these years, we can finally hold our heads up high and be proud!” I was so moved to hear her say this. Things had been hard for our family for so many years. Wasn’t this the day we’d been waiting for? Then I started working even harder, working overtime late into the night all the time and not even resting on the weekends. I had even less time to spend with my wife and child. Then in 2008, I accepted Almighty God’s work of

the last days, but I was still spending most of my time at work. I just attended gatherings here and there, and didn't read God's words very much. My career was going really well—I had the appreciation of leaders and the esteem of co-workers, and everyone was saying that as soon as a position for promotion became available, it was sure to be mine. I felt like that would be my chance to get exactly what I'd wanted out of life, to really stand out, so I started working even harder and currying favor with the leaders. However, I still got beat out by a leader's son, and then I was transferred to an unimportant department.

That transfer was really upsetting for me, and I thought my co-workers were sure to talk about me and look down on me. I just couldn't lift my spirits and I didn't want to see anybody. Just during that miserable time, a brother in the church told me, "You didn't get this promotion, but got transferred to an unimportant department. It looks like a bad thing, but it's actually a good thing! If you'd been promoted like you'd wanted and you had a higher position, you'd just want even more. You'd be facing more temptations, struggling with name and status day in, day out. How would you have the time and inclination to pursue the truth? This is a crucial time for God's work to save and perfect mankind. If you fritter away these precious days, how can you be saved? God's good will is in not getting this promotion—God cannot bear to see us continue to be toyed with and hurt by Satan, living in a struggle for name and gain, fighting and scheming, and then lose our chance at God's salvation." His words were a wake-up call for me; I figured he was right. Before, I was totally focused on how to be the one to stand out, so I was never able to quiet my heart and really read God's words or pursue the truth. Maybe that setback was a turning point on my path of faith.

I read this in God's words after that: **"As someone who is normal, and who pursues the love of God, entry into the kingdom to become one of the people of God is your true future, and a life that is of the utmost value and significance; no one is more blessed than you. Why do I say this? Because those who do not believe in God live for the flesh, and they live for Satan, but today you live for God, and live to do the will of God. That is why I say your lives are of the utmost significance. Only this group of people, who have been selected by God, are able to live out a life of the utmost significance: No one else on earth is able to live out a life of such value and meaning"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Know God's Newest Work and Follow His Footsteps). God's words are very clear on what makes a meaningful life. I thought back on my years of fighting for name and gain—even now with a bit of status and prestige, I still felt really empty. I always put on a false face within official circles. For the sake of status, I not only had to fawn on leaders, but I had to handle my co-workers, wringing myself dry to compete and go up against others, all the while afraid others were scheming against me. I truly understood the misery and stress of that world. I asked myself: What's the meaning, the value behind working hard all my life to fight for status and prestige? Is the entire point of my life just to appear illustrious, to bring glory to my family? For thousands of years, haven't so many grand people with great status still died with empty hands? God created man, not so we could have our names live on through the ages or fight for name and status, but to have us learn the truth and come to know God, do the duty of a created being, and live out a true human likeness. That's the only kind of life with meaning and value, and only that will gain God's approval. I said a prayer to God when I realized this, ready to let go of my pursuit of name and status and to step onto the proper path in life.

In the department I was transferred to, there wasn't a single busy period throughout the entire year. I took that chance to read more of God's words and equip myself with the truth, and when the weekend came around, I'd attend gatherings and preach the gospel with brothers and sisters. I felt really at peace, and I wasn't doing all that hobnobbing with co-workers anymore. I'd lost interest in all those messy matters like cultivating relationships and exploiting unofficial channels. I felt much freer and more relaxed. But I ended up transferred again, to the department for government-ordered demolitions, where I personally witnessed all the evil ways the Communist Party bullies and harms the common people. That made me feel even more tepid toward the career path I was on. The government was always forcing people to move from their homes, claiming they needed space for urban construction, and the compensation was generally very low. People were unhappy about it and would protest. It was clear that the government was secretly colluding with developers, making huge profits from the deals and squeezing the regular people. But they were always twisting the facts, saying the people just refused to move and it was getting in the way of urban construction. By day they'd have us go do ideological work to convince the people, then by night they'd send people to harass them, to force them into signing an agreement to move. None of the residents could get any peace. If anyone steadfastly refused to move, they'd be forcibly detained and beaten, with charges of obstructing the urban redevelopment. The leaders wouldn't stop until the person signed. Some people made appeals to higher authorities, but they were arrested and beaten. There was a person who was even beaten to the point of disability, and ended up dying. A leader once even said to everyone's face in an internal meeting, smiling, "Now that this guy's dead, that's one less appeal to worry about. That'll be fewer disciplinary points against us!" Everyone

else was there smiling, too. Seeing government officials bully and exploit regular people with absolutely no regard for human life, I knew that staying within the Communist Party system and continuing to associate with those people could never come to anything good. I started doing my absolute best to avoid all of them, to not mingle among them. If I was asked to go negotiate with someone who had to move, to go beat them, I'd do absolutely everything I could to duck away, or go to help maintain order. When I could see someone closer up who was howling as they were beaten, that look of helplessness in their eyes left my conscience feeling so accused. Sometimes I'd even wake up from nightmares in the middle of the night. Living in that environment every day was a kind of agony. I felt that if I kept doing that sort of unconscionable work, I'd be punished sooner or later, and I wanted to leave that place just as soon as I could. Although the leaders made oblique comments encouraging me to pursue my career, I remained unmotivated and wasn't trying to curry favor with them for promotions anymore. But much to my surprise, it was just at that time that I did get a promotion, to go act as director of the town disciplinary office.

After that reassignment, I often appeared at all sorts of meetings alongside important town government officials. My co-workers and fellow villagers were all extremely friendly with me and worked to stay on my good side. I did enjoy the way that felt. Before I knew it, I started getting restless, and wanted to be valued and recognized by the leaders. But when I needed to go on business trips or go out to attend a meeting in a leader's stead, that impacted my ability to attend gatherings and do my duty. I was really conflicted, because I knew a duty is a responsibility one can't shirk. I couldn't give up my duty because of personal affairs, but when a leader arranged for me to go take on something like that, that meant they thought highly of me. If I made an excuse not to do it in favor of my duty, would

they say I was dropping the ball at a critical time, and then stop assigning me important tasks? It was really hard for me to make a decision in the moment, so I brought it before God in prayer, asking Him to guide me to understand His will and help me find the path of practice. I read this passage in His words after that: **“Behind everything that happens is a battle: Every time people put the truth into practice, or put the love of God into practice, there is a great battle, and though all may seem well with their flesh, in the depths of their hearts a life-and-death battle will, in fact, be going on—and only after this intense battle, after a tremendous amount of reflection, can victory or defeat be decided. One does not know whether to laugh or cry. Because many of the intentions within people are wrong, or else because much of God’s work is at odds with their notions, when people put the truth into practice, a great battle is waged behind the scenes. Having put this truth into practice, behind the scenes, people will have shed countless tears of sadness before finally making up their mind to satisfy God. It is because of this battle that people endure suffering and refinement; this is true suffering. When the battle comes upon you, if you are able to truly stand on the side of God, you will be able to satisfy God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). Thinking this over, I saw that this was a battle between satisfying God or satisfying Satan, to see which I would choose. I realized that when I encountered things, my first consideration was the leaders’ attitude and my own career—name and status were still too important to me. I thought about how, to save mankind, God took such a tremendous risk to become flesh in the great red dragon’s country and express the truth. God has given everything for us with no complaints or regrets, but I couldn’t make that slightest sacrifice for the sake of my duty. Where was my conscience? This realization left me feeling

so ashamed. I said a prayer, wanting to let go of my personal interests and perform my duty. After that, I faced choices between my duty and my job several more times, and sometimes I felt weak and struggled over it. But when I was ready to satisfy God, I saw He always opened up a path for me, and I was sharing the gospel and doing my duty right under the leader's nose without ever being discovered. My drive to do my duty kept growing. It wasn't long before my entire family learned that I was a believer and I was spreading the gospel. They all started opposing my faith.

My wife was a teacher, so she had her salary paid by the government, too. She told me, "You've been in the Party system all these years, so it's not like you don't know what their attitude toward religion is. They're arresting believers left and right. By having faith and sharing the gospel, aren't you staring down the barrel of a gun? If you keep on with this, it'll be the end of our living, the end of our whole family!" I shared testimony about God's appearance and work with her and talked about the significance of having faith. I said, "The Savior has come down now, expressing truths to save mankind. This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to be saved. The benefits and status we see right before our eyes are all temporary. If we just follow the Communist Party, always wanting to get rich, can that save us from the disasters? If we fall into that no amount of money will do us any good! Just look at the Lord Jesus' apostle Matthew—he was a tax collector, such a good career. But when he saw the Savior, the Lord Jesus had come, he rushed to follow Him. Besides, if we're always following the Party in doing evil, we're bound to get retribution, to be punished. Following Christ of the last days is the only way to be saved." My wife wasn't interested in anything about God and wouldn't listen to anything I had to say about it. But after that, she noticed that ever since I'd gained my faith, I wasn't out eating and drinking with co-workers and

neglecting things at home, but I was more and more orderly in my life and had time to spend with her and our kid. Sometimes I'd start talking about matters having to do with life in general. Gradually, she stopped trying to stand in my way. But on her side of the family, everyone was opposed to my faith. One of them who had a government job, advised me, "While you're still young, you should be thinking about how to climb the ranks and make money. Then your parents and kid can enjoy all that along with you—that's the only practical thing to do. Those things you're going after for your religion are all vague and impractical!" I told him, "You're not a believer, so you don't understand the meaning and value of having faith and pursuing the truth. The truth is so precious, and it can point out the path of life for us, cleanse our corruption, and save us. These things can't be measured with money. You're a Party insider too, so tell me, over these years you've gained status and material enjoyment, have you really been happy? Do you have true peace in your heart?" He had nothing to say to that. And when my brother-in-law couldn't get me to budge, he said angrily, "If you don't take our advice, when leadership finds out about your religious stuff, losing your stable living will be the least of your concerns. You could be arrested, then you'd lose your life and your possessions, and your entire family would be implicated!" There were others that tried to force me to give up my faith, too.

I was very clear with them that I was determined to keep following God, but after getting home I started to feel nervous. If my leaders found out, I wouldn't just be penalized or lose my job, but I could be arrested and go to prison, then I'd be left with nothing, and everyone around me would certainly reject me and keep their distance. It would be a total fall from grace. Wouldn't I be left empty-handed? I felt some internal struggle again at that thought and was so stressed I couldn't sleep. Thinking that I was

bound to lose my comfortable life and enviable position sooner or later, I felt really empty inside, really upset. In my pain and misery, I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to understand His will. I read this passage in God's words after that: **"Born into such a filthy land, man has been severely blighted by society, he has been influenced by feudal ethics, and he has been taught at 'institutes of higher learning.' The backward thinking, corrupt morality, mean view on life, despicable philosophy for living, utterly worthless existence, and depraved lifestyle and customs—all of these things have severely intruded upon man's heart, and severely undermined and attacked his conscience. As a result, man is ever more distant from God, and ever more opposed to Him. Man's disposition becomes more vicious by the day, and there is not a single person who will willingly give up anything for God, not a single person who will willingly obey God, nor, moreover, a single person who will willingly seek the appearance of God. Instead, under the power of Satan, man does nothing but pursue pleasure, giving himself over to the corruption of the flesh in the land of mud. Even when they hear the truth, those who live in darkness give no thought to putting it into practice, nor are they inclined to seek out God even if they have beheld His appearance. How could a mankind so depraved have any chance of salvation? How could a mankind so decadent live in the light?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God). God's words revealed the source of my pain. Why was I so miserable in the face of a choice? It was because I was too deeply corrupted by Satan, and ever since I was little I'd believed in satanic philosophies like "Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors," taking them as goals for life. I went after gaining others' esteem and admiration, feeling like that was having aspiration. In my drive to achieve this, I was a diligent student,

and then after joining the workforce, I was always trying to read the room, bootlicking, and being obsequious to win leaders' favor and then get promotions. Even knowing full well that anything done with the Communist Party would be an outrageous atrocity, I still steeled myself and went along, doing service for Satan and living in misery with no peace. It was Almighty God's words that showed me the value and meaning of our lives, and this was what made me feel more and more fulfilled. But faced with the choice of probably losing my job and my future if I kept my faith, and being rejected by others, I saw that satanic philosophy "Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors" still had its claws deep inside me. Making that decision was so difficult, so agonizing, as if not pursuing name and gain was neglecting my actual responsibilities or was even a monstrous outrage. I wasn't willing to lose my name and status, as if losing those things was akin to losing life itself. It wasn't until I read God's words of revelation that I saw how Satan uses that to bind people, to hurt us and get us to distance ourselves from God and betray Him. It reminded me of a hymn of God's words titled **"You Should Pursue Positive Progress": "People's entire lives are in the hands of God, and if it were not for their resolution before God, who would be willing to live in vain in this empty world of man? Why bother? Rushing in and out of the world, if they do not do anything for God, will their entire lives not have been wasted? Even if God does not deem your actions worthy of mention, will you not give a smile of gratification at the moment of your death?"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of "God's Words to the Entire Universe", Chapter 39). This hymn was really inspiring for me. We have just a few decades in this life, so we have to seize this opportunity to experience God's work and be saved, do the duty of a created being, and gain the truth and life, otherwise this chance to be saved by God will be

lost. Then wouldn't our lives be all for nothing? If the Communist Party arrested, imprisoned, and tortured me because of my faith, then even if I ended up dying, I knew I would have no complaints. God gave me this opportunity at life, so I should devote it to God. Once I realized this I prayed, "Oh God! I want to be freed from the constraints, the shackles of the great red dragon and give my whole self to You. Please guide me and give me faith, and help me cross this next hurdle."

Something happened afterward that spurred me to get out of the Communist Party system as soon as I could. A leader discovered that one of the Party members was religious and, gritting his teeth in anger, said we had to get him to the police station to give him some rough treatment. I felt afraid whenever I thought about the Communist Party's attitude toward religion. I was thinking that it was so hostile to religious beliefs and hated Christians so much, I was bound to be their target for this sooner or later. It was a dangerous place I should leave as soon as I could. Plus, all those years I'd been singing the praises of the Communist Party and had gone along with it in so much evil. If I stayed within that system, I'd just get more and more enmeshed in it and be beyond redemption. I had to walk away from that satanic organization right away, and make a clean break.

When I told my wife what I was thinking she got anxious right away. She said she could support me in my faith, but she couldn't allow me to quit my job. She even called my siblings over to stop me. They were mostly working in state-run enterprises and were worried that their careers could be impacted if I were arrested. My oldest sister even knelt before me, crying and tugging on my hands, and said, "You have such a wonderful job with a high salary that even people with a doctorate or master's can't find. How could you walk away from such a great job to go follow God?" She also said that she'd stay kneeling there as long as I kept insisting on keeping my

faith. My other sister was really angry too, and talked about how she'd suffered to help pay for my education and hadn't been able to get married until she was 30. Now we were finally doing okay after all that work and the whole family was benefitting from it. If I resigned, it would be letting her down after all her years of effort. My oldest sister also griped that if I quit my job, she wouldn't receive any more special paid sick leave at her school, and her son was hoping I could help him find a job. She said I couldn't only consider myself in my faith, but I had to think of my family, too. I was having a hard time making a choice at that moment. My brothers and sisters had been with me through so much ever since I was little, and I'd been driven all along by the hope that they could have good lives and hold their heads up high. They'd certainly be happy if I agreed to them, but since I was a believer and was following God now, I had to do the duty of a created being to not let down God's grace and love. If I promised my family that I'd give up my faith, wouldn't that be a betrayal of God? Betraying God is a monstrous offense, and something I absolutely couldn't do. God has expressed so many truths to save mankind, and He's paid such a great price. If I had no intention of paying Him back, and even compromised with the devil Satan, bending a knee to it, that would be unconscionable. I was feeling some pain and weakness, but I knew I had to make that choice. I said to them, "No matter how much money or how good of a job you have, can that fix the pain of emptiness? Can it buy life itself? Don't so many rich, powerful people still keep living in pain? Having faith and pursuing the truth is the only way to resolve these problems. The Savior has come down, expressing truths to save humanity. This is an opportunity that will never come again, and it's incredibly fleeting. The great disasters will be upon us in the blink of an eye. If we don't follow God and repent to Him now, by the time the disasters arrive it'll be too late for regrets! I've shared

the gospel quite a bit with all of you before, but you've been afraid to join, afraid of being arrested by the Communist Party. You insist on following the Party, which is a path straight to hell. By pushing me to keep following it, aren't you doing me harm? Do you know what kind of people are in that system? They're all anti-God demons who are capable of any sort of horrible thing. They are bound to be damned, to be punished. Disasters are growing all the time. If you still don't believe in God and repent to Him, you're bound to fall into disasters and be punished. I've learned some truths over my years of faith, and I've seen clearly that having faith is the only right path in life. You're my family—don't you want the best for me? Why are you insisting on pushing me onto this evil path with the Communist Party? I won't interfere in your personal choices, but my choice is to have faith and follow God. Even if I'm arrested and persecuted, I'll take this path till the end." My wife pulled a long face and walked out, and the others didn't say another word to me. Later, in an attempt to keep me from attending gatherings and doing a duty, my wife locked me up in the house and had my brother-in-law stay there all day to watch me, not letting me out of his sight. I couldn't go anywhere at all for three days straight. That delayed things in my duty and I was feeling really anxious. Not knowing what to do, I prayed to God and asked for His guidance, for Him to give me a way out. Then the evening of the third day, my dad called and said my mom had gone missing, so I finally had a chance to go out to look for her with my brother-in-law. On our way, he warned me, "You've got to give up your faith! Your brother will be here tomorrow, and he said he'll break your legs if you keep your religion, that no matter what, he'll find a way to make you give it up!" This was really distressing for me to hear. I knew that if I didn't get away from them right then, I wouldn't have another chance. But when I was actually about to go, I found it really hard to get past that

mental barrier. Looking at my loved ones and that well-known residential area, thinking about that comfortable life and enviable job—I felt so many pangs in my heart, knowing I was about to lose all of that in a moment. Then a hymn of God’s words titled **“What Have You Dedicated to God?”** that we sang a lot in gatherings came to mind: **“Abraham offered up Isaac—what have you offered up? Job offered up everything—what have you offered up? So many people have given their lives, laid down their heads, shed their blood in order to seek the true way. Have you paid that price?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Significance of Saving the Descendants of Moab). It felt like God was right there face-to-face with me and asking me these questions. When Abraham was 100 years old, God gave him a son, but he was still able to offer him up to God. So many apostles had offered up their youth and spilled their blood for God’s gospel work, but what had I offered up? I was in agony over name and status, these worthless things. I was so selfish and despicable. How was I worthy of the sacrifices God had made to nurture and nourish me all those years? Also, that choice I was making had meaning. It was for my faith and to do the duty of a created being. If I didn’t choose my duty, that would be my lifelong regret. Thinking about it this way gave me my resolve. When my brother-in-law was going upstairs, I took the opportunity to run off. Since then, I’ve been doing my duty in the church full time.

I’ve heard since then that there were several leaders and co-workers in my department who were giving and receiving bribes in their pursuit of status and wealth, and when things came to light, they got thrown behind bars. I was really rejoicing for having received God’s protection. Before when I was trying to get ahead, I’d been sending gifts like all the others did, and I’d taken other people’s bribes. If I’d stayed in that sort of environment I would have ended up like them. And now, even though I don’t have all

those perks or the admiration and envy of others, I can do a duty in the church, pursue the truth, and be an honest person. I feel so fulfilled and happy. This truly is the most meaningful, valuable kind of life. Just as it says in a hymn of God's words called **"The Most Meaningful Life"**: **"You are a created being—you should of course worship God and pursue a life of meaning. Since you are a human being, you should expend yourself for God and endure all suffering! You should gladly and assuredly accept the little suffering you are subjected to today and live a meaningful life, like Job and Peter. You are people who pursue the right path, those who seek improvement. You are people who rise up in the nation of the great red dragon, those whom God calls righteous. Is that not the most meaningful life?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Practice (2)). Almighty God is the One who saved me, allowing me to escape Satan's ravages and gain God's salvation.

59. The Bitterness of Being a People-pleaser

By Frankie, Greece

Last year, Brother Gabriel, who I was on the road preaching the gospel with, was dismissed. When I asked him about it, he told me that he hadn't been doing a good job in his duty the last few years; he did things his own way and was willful, which seriously disrupted the church's work, and so, he was dismissed. I felt bad he'd gotten to this point, and seeing him filled with so much regret and feeling so awful. Thinking back on our work together, I had noticed he muddled through his work and did things his own way. I wanted to point it out to him, to help him reflect and gain self-awareness, but just as I was about to open my mouth, I hesitated. I figured, "The leader has surely exposed and dealt with him plenty when dismissing him, so he must already be pretty miserable. If I say something too, won't that just be rubbing salt in the wound? Wouldn't he think I was lacking empathy? Besides, the leader must have already mentioned the issues I noticed, so I'll just comfort him." So I said to him, "I'm sure you've gained a lot of experience in all these years on the road sharing the gospel, or at least have a lot of insight. Lots of brothers and sisters in the church here are new believers who joined within the last few years; they don't have much experience spreading the gospel. You'll be able to help everyone when you are back home." To my surprise, his response was, "Brother, hearing you say this upsets me. I thought you'd point out my problems and help me so I could reflect on myself and become more self-aware; this would have been beneficial to my life. But instead, you praise me even though I've sunk to this level, making me think my dismissal isn't a big deal and that I'm more capable than the others. You're being a people-pleaser, acting as Satan's minion, pushing me closer to hell! These nice-sounding words aren't

edifying for people, so don't say them anymore. This isn't love, it's actually harmful and destructive." I felt really ashamed when I heard the brother say this, and just wanted to find a hole to crawl into. I was well aware that there hadn't been much change to Gabriel's corrupt disposition despite years of faith, and that he'd never had any obvious results in his duty, and that this was a dangerous state. Not only was I not pointing out his problems and helping him, I was just saying nice things. I was being disingenuous, polite, and complimentary in a secular way. Wasn't that just playing with him and being deceitful? Gabriel's current dismissal was a good chance for him to reflect and know himself better. If he could seek the truth, self-reflect, and gain true repentance, then this failure could be a turning point in his faith. But I was a stumbling block, spouting some insincere drivel to toy with, disrupt, and mislead him. I was being Satan's minion. God does His utmost to save people, while Satan plots and schemes to disrupt and obstruct people, and pull people down into hell. That nonsense of mine was just harming my brother. I felt intense fear at this thought, so I found some of God's words to read, and in God's words, I began to reflect on and get to know this problem of mine.

I saw that God's word says: **"If you have a good relationship with a brother or a sister, and they ask you to point out what is wrong with them, how should you do it? This relates to what approach you take to the matter. Is your approach based on the truth principles, or do you use philosophies for dealing with the world? If you can clearly see that they have a problem, but don't tell them outright so as to avoid harming your relationship, and you even make excuses, saying, 'My stature is small now and I don't understand your problems thoroughly. When I do, I'll tell you,' then what is the issue? This involves a philosophy for dealing with the world. Is this not trying to fool others?"**

You should speak of as much as you can see clearly; and if something is not evident to you, say so. This is saying what's in your heart. If you have certain thoughts and certain things are evident to you, but you are afraid of offending them, terrified of hurting their feelings, and so choose to say nothing, then this is living by a philosophy for dealing with the world. If you discover that someone has a problem or has gone astray, even if you can't help them with love, at the very least you must point out the problem so that they can reflect on it. If you ignore it, isn't this doing them harm?" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Resolve Their Notions and Misunderstandings of God).

And there was this passage about cunning people: **"They have no love for positive things, they do not yearn for the light, and they do not love the way of God or the truth. They like to follow worldly trends, they are enamored with prestige, profit, and status, they love standing out from the crowd, they worship prestige, profit, and status, and they venerate the great and famous, but in actual fact, they venerate demons and Satan. What they pursue at heart isn't the truth or positive things; instead, they revere knowledge. ... They use Satan's philosophies, its logic, they use its every ploy, every ruse, in every setting, in order to con people out of their personal trust, to make them worship and follow them. This is not the path that ought to be walked by people who believe in God; not only will such people not be saved, but also meet with God's punishment—of this there cannot be the slightest doubt"**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. One Cannot Be Saved by Believing in Religion or Engaging in Religious Ceremony). God's words exposed the truth of my intent and corruption entirely. I was clear on Gabriel's problems, he had been slipshod in his duty and didn't put his heart into it. He wasn't tenacious or principled in his work. He did whatever he pleased, and had

disrupted the work of the church. I had been a people-pleaser and was afraid of offending him, so I never pointed these things out. Now that he had been dismissed and was opening up to me in fellowship about his failures, I should have talked about his problems and fellowshiped on God's will to help him know himself and repent to God. That would have been truly loving, beneficial, and edifying for him. But I was a people-pleaser, saying a bunch of fake garbage. Wasn't I just trying to fool him into liking me? I wanted him to feel that when he experienced failure, it was the leader who dealt with and exposed him, but that I was the one who warmed his heart and comforted him. Then he'd be grateful and have a good impression of me. I was using unbelievers' secular philosophies when interacting with my brother, like "If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings," "Speak good words in harmony with others' feelings and reason, as being frank annoys others," "Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship," and so on. These are all evil, worldly words to live by, and they are entirely satanic philosophies. Unbelievers' interactions always uphold Satan's way of the world, and their words are always ingratiating and hypocritical. They put on an act, feel others out, have trickery in everything they say, and don't say a single true or genuine word. I was a long-time believer who'd eaten and drunk so much of God's word, but I still couldn't say a single thing that was true. Instead, I used satanic philosophies just like an unbeliever, and was a vessel for Satan, becoming increasingly slippery and devious. I was truly pathetic! It reminded me of God's words: **"If believers are just as casual and unrestrained in their speech and conduct as unbelievers are, then they are even more evil than unbelievers; they are archetypal demons"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). **"The more you are in**

the presence of God, the more experiences you will have. If you still live in the world like a beast—your mouth professing belief in God but your heart somewhere else—and if you still study the worldly philosophies for living, then will all your previous labors not have been for nothing?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. On Experience). Thinking back on my years of faith, I hadn't gained the truth or become a simple, honest person, but still clung to secular ways of living. I was not a person who loves or accepts the truth. I came before God and prayed, “God, I'm so devious! I want to repent and stop living by satanic, worldly philosophies.”

After that experience and lesson, I was able to be more vigilant when interacting with others, and practiced speaking in ways that would benefit people, rather than side-stepping issues to be a people-pleaser. But because I was so deeply corrupted by Satan, when something involved my personal interests, I couldn't help but be a people-pleaser again.

I was working with Brother Hudson on video production at the time. He had fairly strong opinions and was a lot better at the work than I was. I felt I should be modest so he didn't get the impression that I was an arrogant know-nothing. So in the course of our duties, whenever our opinions differed, I tried to stick to “Harmony is a treasure; forbearance is brilliance” to avoid damaging our relationship and get along with him. Sometimes, I'd see some mistakes in the videos he worked on, and suggested fixing them, but he didn't think the things I mentioned were problems. He'd just give some excuse or personal opinion. Although I didn't entirely agree with him, I was afraid further discussion would leave us at an impasse or start an argument, and that everyone would call me arrogant, self-righteous, and stubborn, so I let it go. We worked together this way for a few months, but when our videos came out there were always

issues here and there, and most of the issues were ones I had raised at the beginning. As a result, we had to redo the videos. Hudson ended up being dismissed for being arrogant, self-righteous and stubborn. Even though the videos were finished in the end, I didn't feel settled or at peace about it. Rather, I was uneasy and guilty. I was always a people-pleaser in my duty, maintaining superficial harmony, afraid of offending others, and didn't uphold principles. I hadn't truly fulfilled my function as a partner and was obstructing the video work. I felt absolutely awful. Then the leader came to talk to me and exposed me, saying, "You haven't upheld the truth principles in your work with your brothers and sisters. You clearly knew Hudson's opinion during production was wrong, but still blindly followed him in order to prevent conflict and maintain your image. That meant the videos had to be redone and it's delayed our progress." Then she said, "You tend to bend with the wind. You need to seek the truth and resolve this right away." This was hard for me to hear. I prayed and reflected on this over the next few days, and read the word of God.

I saw that God's word says: **"To all appearances, the antichrists' words seem especially kind, cultured, and distinguished. Anyone who violates principle, who disrupts and disturbs church work, is not exposed or criticized no matter who they are; the antichrist turns a blind eye, letting people think they are magnanimous in all matters. People's every corruption and evil deed is met with beneficence and toleration. They do not grow angry, or fly into a rage, they will not get cross and blame people when they do something wrong and harm the interests of God's house. No matter who commits evil and disturbs the work of the church, they pay no heed, as if this has nothing to do with them, and they will never offend people because of it. What are the antichrists most concerned with? With how many people look up to**

them, and with how many people see them when they suffer, and admire them for it. The antichrists believe that suffering must never be for nothing; no matter what hardship they endure, what price they pay, what good deeds they do, how caring, considerate, and loving they are toward others, this must all be carried out in front of others, more people must see it. And what is their aim in acting thus? To win people over, to make more people feel admiration and approval toward their actions, toward their behavior, toward their character. There are even antichrists that try to establish an image of themselves as someone good through this outwardly good behavior, so that more people come to them looking for help. ... Their actions don't simply inspire veneration in people's hearts—they also give them a place there. The antichrists wish to take the place of God. This is what they are aiming for when they do these things. Evidently, their actions have already yielded early results: In the hearts of these people who lack discernment, the antichrists now have a place, and there are now people who venerate and admire them, which was precisely the antichrists' aim" (The Word, Vol.

4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Ten)). God shows that antichrists are particularly evil and despicable. They are good at acting nice and saying nice things to disguise themselves and win others' hearts, making people think that they alone are tolerant and understanding, so others will seek them out for comfort. That takes people farther and farther from God, and the antichrists take God's place in their hearts. I was just like that. Brothers and sisters need to point things out to each other and help each other during their duties, but I was avoiding doing anything offensive just to protect my own reputation. I saw problems with Hudson's videos, and yet I didn't uphold the truth principles; I just went with the flow. I was a people-pleaser and didn't practice the truth. I didn't want everyone to think I was arrogant,

but rather that I was tolerant, understanding, and cared about others' feelings. I wanted to make all the people I interacted with happy so they'd like me and have a good impression of me. To achieve my vile aim, I didn't even spare the church's work in my attempt to maintain a positive image. I was so selfish! From God's judgment and revelation, I saw that by being a people-pleaser, I was on the path of an antichrist. I felt so guilty when I realized this. I continued reflecting on myself after that. Thinking back on all my time as a believer, I had always put on a nice face with other people. Whenever I saw someone who seemed benevolent, cultivated and refined in their speech and actions, I tried to emulate and copy them. I wanted to seem more easygoing and approachable to safeguard my image in my brothers' and sisters' minds. I hardly ever spoke up when I saw others' problems or when they revealed their corrupt disposition, afraid of embarrassing them by exposing them. I remember when I was a gospel deacon before, I was always trying hard to be low-key and speak with humility. When I saw others being slipshod in their duty and unprincipled, I was afraid everyone would think I was unsympathetic if I brought it up, and that it would break my "nice guy" image. So out of a so-called love, when I tried to help others, I was careful with my words, and was gentle and indirect. I never exposed anyone directly or helped them see the severity of what they'd done. I'd just give them an indirect hint. When I had to dismiss someone, I felt that this would offend the person, and didn't know what to say. I did my best to get others to offer fellowship in my stead, avoiding it whenever I could. ... In this way, I did my utmost to manage and protect my status and image, and the brothers and sisters said I never put on airs, and that I was easy to get along with. They even recommended me for a leadership position, because I "had good humanity" and wouldn't oppress others. I felt so self-satisfied. Antichrists use superficial good behavior to mislead and draw people in.

Didn't I have the same intent and goals at heart? I'd never reflected on my despicable intent or corrupt nature, and felt there was nothing wrong with being a people-pleaser. I could gain others' approval and support, and make people think well of me: It felt like a great way to live. But now I saw that by being a people-pleaser, I was establishing myself in the most secretive, covert way, to mislead others and draw them in. I was walking the path of antichrists!

One day, I read a passage of God's words in my devotionals that really stirred me: **"What is the consequence when people always think of their own self-interest, when they are always trying to protect their own pride and vanity, when they reveal a corrupt disposition yet do not seek the truth to fix it? It is that they have no life entry, it is that they lack true experiential testimony. And this is dangerous, is it not? If you never practice the truth, if you have no experiential testimony, then in due course you will be exposed and cast out. What use do people without experiential testimony have in the house of God? They are bound to do any duty poorly, and be unable to do anything properly. Are they not just garbage? If people never practice the truth after years of believing in God, they are nonbelievers; they are evil. If you never practice the truth, and if your transgressions grow ever more numerous, then your end is set. It is clear to see that all your transgressions, the mistaken path you walk, and your refusal to repent all add up to a multitude of evil deeds; and so your end is that you will go to hell—you will be punished. Do you think this is a trivial matter? If you have not been punished, you will have no sense of how terrifying this is. When the day comes where you really do face calamity, and you are faced with death, it will be too late for regrets. If, in your faith in God, you do not accept the truth, and if you have believed in God for**

years but there has been no change in you, the ultimate consequence is that you will be cast out and abandoned” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). I was always being a nice guy and not practicing the truth. When I cooperated with others, it was always at the expense of the interests of the church that I achieved the evil aim of luring and winning others’ hearts. Everything I did was evil. If I carried on this way, I would end up being cast out and punished by God! From God’s words, I could feel His righteous disposition and how He’s disgusted by those who don’t practice the truth. I wanted to repent right away, to seek a path of practice, and resolve my people-pleasing disposition.

I read that God’s word says: **“When your relationship with God has become normal, then you will also have normal relationships with people. To build a normal relationship with God, all must be built on the foundation of God’s words, you must be able to perform your duty according to God’s words and what God asks, you must set your views straight, and must seek the truth in all things. You must practice the truth when you understand it, and regardless of what happens to you, you must pray to God and seek with a God-obeying heart. Practicing thus, you will be able to maintain a normal relationship with God. At the same time as performing your duty properly, you must also ensure that you do nothing that does not benefit the life entry of God’s chosen ones, and say nothing that is unhelpful to the brothers and sisters. At the very least, you must do nothing that goes against your conscience and must absolutely not do anything shameful. That which rebels against or resists God, in particular, you absolutely must not do, and you must not do anything that disturbs the work or life of the church. Be just and honorable in everything you do and ensure that your every action is presentable before God. Although the flesh may sometimes be**

weak, you must be able to put the interests of God's family first, without greed for personal profit, without doing anything selfish or despicable, often reflecting on yourself. In this way, you will be able to often live before God, and your relationship with God will become completely normal" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How Is Your Relationship With God?). **"For all who perform a duty, no matter how profound or shallow their understanding of the truth is, the simplest way to practice entering into the truth reality is to think of the interests of God's house in everything, and to let go of one's selfish desires, personal intents, motives, pride, and status. Put the interests of God's house first—this is the least one should do. If a person who performs a duty cannot even do this much, then how can they be said to be performing their duty? That is not performing one's duty. You should first think of the interests of God's house, be considerate of God's will, and consider the work of the church. Put these things first and foremost; only after that can you think about the stability of your status or how others regard you. Do you not feel that this becomes a little easier when you divide it into two steps and make some compromises? If you practice like this for a while, you will come to feel that satisfying God is not such a difficult thing. Furthermore, you should be able to fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duty, and set aside your selfish desires, intents, and motives; you should have consideration for God's will, and put the interests of God's house, the work of the church, and the duty that you are supposed to perform first. After experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to comport yourself. It is living straightforwardly and honestly, and not being a base, vile person; it is living justly and honorably rather than being despicable, base, and a good-for-nothing.**

You will feel that this is how a person should act and the image that they should live out” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). From reading God’s word, I understood that only those who seek the truth in everything and stand on God’s side, who let go of their personal desires, and uphold the church’s work, are living out a human likeness and can have normal relationships with others. After that, I started to practice giving first consideration in every situation to protecting the interests of the church, and tried to satisfy God’s will through my speech and actions. After doing this for a while, I saw I had many chances to practice the truth in daily life and in my duty. For example, in gatherings, I saw some people speak words and doctrines or go off topic. Or there would be someone who rambled on during fellowship, prolonging the length of our gathering. This harmed our church life, but the team leader didn’t point it out or correct it. At first, I didn’t want to say anything, but I felt kind of guilty—why did I want to be a people-pleaser again? I said a prayer to God right away, forsaking my wrongful intent. Toward the end of the gathering, I brought up the issues I’d seen and suggested solutions. I felt how forsaking myself and upholding the work of the church like this brought me a great deal of peace. Also, a brother I knew really well was dismissed. He told me it was because he’d been craving comfort, was cunning and slippery, and ineffective during his duty. At first, I wanted to comfort him and make him think well of me, but then I realized I had to practice the truth this time. So, I calmed my heart and considered what I should say to help edify this brother. I thought about our prior interactions. His craving for comfort had been pretty obvious during his duty. Not sparing any words, I pointed out the attitude problems he displayed during his duty, and sent him some words of God that were

relevant. He thanked me and said telling him all this had helped him. After doing this, I felt very calm, and very much at peace.

Through the judgment and revelation of God's words, I saw that if I continued to live by Satan's worldly philosophies, I'd only become more slippery and devious; I'd miss the lowest bar of what it meant to be human, and end up hurting others and myself. I also learned that living by God's words and conducting myself according to the truth principles is the only way to have humanity and be a truly good person.

60. Reporting a False Leader: A Personal Struggle

By Gan Xiao, China

In August last year, a leader transferred me to a different church after I was dismissed. I noticed that Brother Liang Hui showed up an hour late to my first gathering there. Sister Tan Min, the church leader, was there too. I thought, “I’ve heard brothers and sisters say that Liang Hui is careless and does whatever he wants in his duty, and that he shows up late for no reason to gatherings all the time. He’s really late to today’s gathering, so Tan Min should fellowship with him on this problem.” But she was being totally casual about it and hadn’t said a thing. During the gathering, another brother talked about how he felt constrained by money, that he couldn’t keep his mind on his duty, and he seemed pretty down. A few of us found some words of God to fellowship and help him, but as a church leader, Tan Min didn’t share any fellowship at all. I saw that she wasn’t taking on any responsibility in the gathering, and was just going through the motions without helping anyone with their problems. I wanted to talk to her about this problem. But then I figured that since it was my first gathering there, I might not be seeing the whole picture, so I should just wait and see before I spoke up. I was taken aback to see that she was exactly the same in the next few gatherings. Sometimes she’d wrap up a gathering pretty quickly after we read some of God’s words without fellowshiping much on them, and she didn’t pay attention to fellowshiping the words of God. I thought to myself: “The main part of a leader’s duty is to guide brothers and sisters in reading God’s words and fellowshiping on the truth, so that they can understand the truth and enter into the reality of God’s words. But Tan Min isn’t taking the lead in fellowshiping God’s words, and she doesn’t resolve people’s problems. Isn’t this a dereliction of duty? Is this not just going through the

motions? How is anything going to get done like this? This will delay everyone's life entry if this continues. I want to say something, but I'm afraid she won't accept it, that she will say I'm arrogant and that I should be reflecting on myself after being dismissed instead of butting into other people's business." At this thought, I decided to back off and just forget it, and focus on myself.

A month later I was put onto another duty and was assigned to two other group gatherings. The brothers and sisters of those gatherings didn't focus on fellowshiping on God's words or talking about their own experiences and knowledge, either. Sometimes they'd just shoot the breeze. I felt like the success of church life is directly related to who's leading that church, and that brothers' and sisters' life entry would be compromised if this went on, so I brought it up with Tan Min. To my surprise, she was totally unaccepting, and even insisted that the lack of success in church life was the brothers' and sisters' problem. I thought to myself: "She doesn't reflect on herself and puts all the responsibility on the brothers and sisters. As a church leader, she doesn't accept the truth at all or listen to brothers' and sisters' suggestions, and she doesn't take on any burden for church life. How can she possibly lead the others to understand the truth, or enter into the reality of God's word? This will only harm the brothers and sisters. I need to talk with her about this again." But just as I was about to say something, I started to worry, thinking, "She didn't accept my recommendation just now, and she had an attitude about it. What good will repeating myself do? She is a church leader, so if I talk to her again, she might say I'm overstepping my bounds and develop a grudge against me. I should just keep my mouth shut." I felt uneasy with that, but in the end, I decided not to say anything. A few days later, Tan Min told me that she'd dealt with brothers and sisters at a gathering, and then vividly described

how she'd dealt with them. I was astonished to hear this, thinking: "How can you be so lacking in self-awareness? Church life is undisciplined because you are irresponsible and careless as a church leader. How could you scold the others for that? Just scolding people without any fellowship on the truth won't solve anything." I really wanted to bring up her issues again, but seeing her strong sense of conviction, I didn't think she'd take it very well. I thought, "I've just been dismissed, so what right do I have to mention her issues? Plus, we are constantly crossing paths with one another, so it would make things hard for me in the church if she got offended. Then if she refuses to give me a duty, I'll lose my chance at salvation. Alright then, I'll not say anything, and just keep my head down, live the church life, and do my own duty."

I heard some brothers and sisters say that Tan Min was in charge of gospel work, but she didn't even have gatherings with them for a while. They also said that they couldn't address newcomers' problems, and some newcomers had been disturbed by religious pastors and elders and stopped attending gatherings. I thought, "Gospel work is so important, but Tan Min isn't doing anything to address the real problems. This is so irresponsible! Tan Min doesn't do any practical work and has a direct hand in newcomers giving up because they're not getting any watering or sustenance!" I felt like this was a really serious problem, and I absolutely had to talk to her about it face to face. I saw Tan Min a couple of days later and brought up the issues those brothers and sisters mentioned, but she still blamed the whole thing entirely on the brothers and sisters. She didn't seem to take any responsibility at all. I also pointed out that by not doing anything to address practical problems as a church leader, she was being irresponsible and neglecting her duty, and that this would delay the work of the church and bring harm to the brothers and sisters. But she just pulled a long face and

refused to say a word. I thought: “She isn’t doing practical work, she isn’t taking on a burden for her duty, and she has never accepted the truth. This means she is a false leader that has been exposed, and I should report her problems to a leader higher up to have her removed as soon as possible.” But I was hesitant, thinking: “If I report her and she finds out, would she say I am picking on her and intentionally at odds with her? It wouldn’t be so bad if she were dismissed, but if she isn’t, wouldn’t I just offend her? That would make it really difficult for me to stay in this church. If she dismisses me and I lose my duty, would I lose my chance at salvation? Fine then, I won’t report her problems, and I’ll just hold on to the duty I have.” But when I thought that way I felt really guilty. I could see that the church had a false leader, but kept it to myself. Was this upholding the work of the church? I felt really conflicted, so I came before God and prayed, “Oh God, I’ve seen Tan Min’s problems and I’d like to report her, but I have some concerns. Please guide me so I can overcome these dark forces and safeguard the work of the church.”

Afterward, I read a passage of God’s word: **“What is the attitude that people should have in terms of how to treat a leader or worker? If what a leader or worker does is right and in line with the truth, then you can obey them; if what they do is wrong and not in line with the truth, then you should not obey them and you can expose them, oppose them and raise a different opinion. If they are unable to do practical work or do evil deeds that cause a disturbance to church work, and are revealed to be a false leader, a false worker, or an antichrist, then you can discern, expose and report them. However, some of God’s chosen people do not understand the truth and are particularly cowardly; they fear being suppressed and tormented by false leaders and antichrists, so they don’t dare uphold principles. They say, ‘If the leader kicks me out, I’m**

finished; if he has everyone expose or forsake me, then I will no longer be able to believe in God. If I'm expelled from the church, then God will not want me and will not save me. And won't my faith have been for nothing?' Is such thinking not ridiculous? Do such people have true faith in God? Would a false leader or antichrist be representing God when they expel you? When a false leader or antichrist torments and expels you, this is the work of Satan, and has nothing to do with God; when people are cleared out or expelled from the church, this is only in line with God's will when there is a joint decision between the church and all of God's chosen people, and when the clearing out or expulsion is wholly in line with the work arrangements of God's house and the truth principles of God's words. How could being expelled by a false leader or antichrist mean you cannot be saved? This is the persecution of Satan and the antichrist, and does not mean that you will not be saved by God. Whether or not you can be saved depends on God. No human being is qualified to decide whether you can be saved by God. You must be clear about this. And to treat your expulsion by a false leader or antichrist as being expelled by God—is this not misinterpreting God? It is. And this is not only misinterpreting God, but also disobeying God. It is also kind of blasphemous against God. And is misinterpreting God in this way not ignorant and foolish? When a false leader or antichrist expels you, why do you not seek the truth? Why don't you seek out somebody who understands the truth in order to gain some discernment? And why do you not report this to the higher-ups? This proves that you do not believe that the truth reigns supreme in the house of God, it shows that you do not have true faith in God, that you are not someone who truly believes in God. If you trust in the almightiness of God, why do you fear the retaliation of a false

leader or antichrist? Can they determine your fate? If you are capable of discernment, and detect that their actions are at odds with the truth, why not fellowship with God's chosen people who understand the truth? You have a mouth, so why do you dare not speak up? Why are you so afraid of a false leader or antichrist? This proves that you are a coward, a good-for-nothing, a lackey of Satan" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Three: They Exclude and Attack Those Who Pursue the Truth). Reading this really brightened my heart. When we find a false leader in the church, we shouldn't kowtow and be constrained by them at every turn. We need to stand up, expose them, and report them to upper leaders. That's God's will. I knew Tan Min didn't do practical work, and that she was a false leader, but I didn't dare speak up about her problems because I was looking at it from the wrong perspective. I was thinking that the leader had authority, and that she decided whether or not I could do a duty, and if I offended her, I could lose my duty and then I wouldn't be saved. I saw that in all my years of faith I still had no understanding of God. In the house of God, the truth and God Himself hold sway. Whether I have a duty or whether I can be saved is up to God, not up to any individual leader. Even if a false leader held authority and I truly was suppressed, that would be temporary. God sees everything and the Holy Spirit will reveal all, so false leaders and antichrists will be exposed and cast out sooner or later. I didn't understand God's righteous disposition, and I was afraid of offending other people, but not of offending God. God didn't have a place in my heart. What kind of a believer was I? I'd been thinking that since I wasn't a leader, I was in no position to critique Tan Min and I worried that other people would say I should mind my own business. The way I was looking at things was absolutely ridiculous. As a member of God's house, it doesn't matter if I'm dismissed or what duty I do—if I discover a false leader in the church, it is

my responsibility, my obligation to report them. That is safeguarding the work of the church and it's a positive thing. It's also taking responsibility for brothers' and sisters' lives, and that's never overstepping my bounds or meddling, and it's especially not being arrogant and getting on a pedestal. This is doing the duty of one of God's chosen people. Realizing this made me reflect on why I'd been so afraid to expose a false leader. What was the real root of the problem?

I read these words from God in my seeking: **“Conscience and reason should both be components of a person’s humanity. These are both the most fundamental and most important. What kind of person is one who lacks conscience and does not have the reason of normal humanity? Generally speaking, they are a person who lacks humanity, a person of extremely poor humanity. Going into more detail, what manifestations of lost humanity does this person exhibit? Have a go at analyzing what characteristics are found in such people and what specific manifestations they present. (They are selfish and mean.) Selfish and mean people are perfunctory in their actions and stand aloof from anything that does not concern them personally. They do not consider the interests of God’s house, nor do they show consideration for God’s will. They take on no burden of performing their duties or testifying for God, and they have no sense of responsibility. ... There are some people who do not take any responsibility regardless of the duty they are performing. They don’t promptly report problems they discover to their superiors, either. When they see people being disruptive and disturbing, they turn a blind eye. When they see wicked people committing evil, they don’t try to stop them. They don’t protect the interests of the house of God, or consider what their duty and responsibility is. When they perform their duty, people like this don’t**

do any real work; they are people-pleasers who are greedy for comfort; they speak and act only for their own vanity, face, status, and interests, and are only willing to devote their time and effort to things that benefit them. The actions and intents of someone like that are clear to everyone: They pop out whenever there is an opportunity to show their face or to enjoy some blessing. But, when there is not an opportunity to show their face, or as soon as there is a time of suffering, they vanish from sight like a tortoise retracting its head. Does this kind of person have conscience and reason? (No.) Does a person without conscience and reason who behaves in this way feel self-reproach? Such people have no sense of self-reproach; the conscience of this kind of person serves no purpose. They have never felt reproach from their conscience, so can they feel the reproach or discipline of the Holy Spirit? No, they cannot” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One’s Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). God’s words helped me understand that being afraid of exposing and reporting a false leader came from relying on satanic philosophies like “Let things drift if they do not affect one personally,” “Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes,” and “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.” These satanic philosophies had become part of my mottos and controlled my thinking, so I was constantly trying to protect my own interests without any thought for the work of the church. I’d become more and more despicable, selfish, and deceitful. I clearly saw that Tan Min didn’t do practical work and wouldn’t accept the truth, that she was a false leader. Her behavior had already impacted the church’s work and had delayed brothers’ and sisters’ life entry, so I should bring this matter to light and report her. But I was afraid of being condemned and suppressed by her if she was offended, so I didn’t dare report her. I wanted to protect my

reputation, status, and my future destination, so I just watched the church's work and brothers' and sisters' life entry suffer with a totally hands-off attitude, turning a blind eye to a false leader. I was standing on Satan's side, indulging a false leader who was disrupting the church's work. I was living by Satan's poisons and had become its slave, only looking out for myself, totally lacking in devotion to God, and devoid of conscience and reason. I wasn't living out a human likeness at all. I saw that I was still under Satan's power and belonged to Satan. I had to pursue the truth, forsake Satan, and be someone who obeys God. When this all became clear to me, I felt like I really owed God and I hated how selfish and unconscionable I was being. I had to report the false leader right away and stop hurting God's heart. So, I told the upper leader all about Tan Min's issues of not doing real work or accepting the truth. But a few days went by, and I didn't hear anything from the upper leader on how they had handled Tan Min. I felt kind of anxious. If this false leader wasn't dismissed soon it could continue to hold up the work of the church, so I thought about writing again to see what was going on. But then I thought, "If I bring it up again, the upper leader might think I'm putting my fingers in too many pies. Anyway, since I'd already said my piece, maybe I've fulfilled my responsibilities and shouldn't worry about the rest." But this thought left me feeling uneasy, and I couldn't get any sleep that night.

I read these words of God one morning: **"If a church contains no one who is willing to practice the truth and no one who can stand witness for God, then that church should be completely isolated, and its connections with other churches must be severed. This is called 'burying death'; this is what it means to spurn Satan. If a church contains several local bullies, and they are followed by 'little flies' that entirely lack discernment, and if the congregants, even after having**

seen the truth, are still incapable of rejecting the binds and manipulation of these bullies, then all those fools will be cast out in the end. These little flies might not have done anything terrible, but they are even more deceitful, even more slick and evasive, and everyone like this will be cast out. Not a single one shall remain! Those who belong to Satan will be returned to Satan, while those who belong to God will surely go in search of the truth; this is decided by their natures. Let all those who follow Satan perish! No pity will be shown to such people. Let those who search for the truth be provided for, and may they take pleasure in God's word to their hearts' content. God is righteous; He would not show favoritism to anyone. If you are a devil, then you are incapable of practicing the truth; if you are someone who searches for the truth, then it is certain that you will not be taken captive by Satan. This is beyond all doubt"

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). I could see from God's words that His disposition is holy and righteous, and won't tolerate any offense. He hates that false leaders and antichrists disrupt the church's work and delay brothers' and sisters' life entry. God detests those who don't practice the truth or safeguard the church's interests when false leaders and antichrists appear. This kind of person understands the truth but still doesn't practice it, and instead just thinks about their own interests. They're really deceitful and sly, and they'll be cast out if they refuse to repent. I knew that Tan Min was a false leader, and now that the leader above her wasn't responding quickly enough, I needed to keep speaking up and see this through to the end. But I just wanted to protect myself and disregard anything that didn't personally impact me. I was allowing her to run rampant and disrupt the work of the church. I wasn't being considerate of God's will and standing on the side of the truth, but was standing on Satan's side. That was taking

part in a false leader's wickedness. Though it didn't look like I'd done anything terrible, if I didn't practice the truth or protect the work of the church in the face of problems, I could only be cast out in the end. I knew that this time I couldn't be concerned about my own interests and that I could no longer allow this false leader to continue to damage the work of the church. The upper leader delayed handling Tan Min, so even though I didn't know the reason, that was a test for me from God to see if I could put my personal interests aside and uphold the truth principles. I had to continue to report this false leader to protect the interests of the church. So, I reported the situation to the upper-level leader again and emphasized the dangers and consequences of failing to dismiss a false leader. She responded and said that over the last few days, she'd had some urgent matters to take care of, and that she'd dismiss Tan Min right away, in line with principles. It was a really big relief for me to see that response and I learned that the only way to know peace is to put the truth into practice.

Tan Min was removed before long and another leader was elected to take on the church's work. After a period of time, the church life achieved a lot of great results and all of our work started to gain steam. I was really happy to see things turn out this way, but at the same time, I felt some guilt and regret. After noticing a false leader, I hadn't reported her quickly enough. I'd just thought about my personal interests, and shown my satanic disposition, bringing losses upon the work of the church. I saw how living by satanic dispositions and not practicing the truth is actually doing evil, and that it's all condemned and despised by God. I also saw how wise the work of God is, and seeing this false leader in the church helped me develop discernment. I also experienced the great harm a false leader in the church can do to God's chosen people. I also learned about God's righteous disposition, and I saw that in God's house, Christ and the truth hold sway,

and no individual gets to call the shots. No matter how high up someone's position is, if they don't practice the truth and do what God demands, they'll never get a firm footing in God's house. They'll be cast out in the end. Only putting God's words into practice and doing things according to principle is in line with His will.

61. Twenty Days of Agony

By Ye Lin, China

One day in December 2002 around 4 p.m., as I was standing on the side of a road making a phone call, I was suddenly grabbed from behind by the hair and arms, and before I could react, my feet were swept from under me. I lost my balance, and hit the ground really hard. Several people immediately had me very firmly held down, with my face pressed hard against the ground and both my hands cuffed behind me. They then hoisted me up off the ground and dragged me into a sedan. I realized I'd been arrested by the police. Their savagery was evident, and I remembered brothers' and sisters' accounts of brutal torture after their arrests. I was really nervous and afraid, and worried I wouldn't be able to withstand the torture and I'd become a Judas. I was praying to God throughout the entire car ride, asking Him to give me faith and strength so I could stand firm in testimony, and not cave in to Satan.

The police brought me straight to a small hotel where they ripped off my shirt and shoes, pulled off my belt, and made me stand barefoot on the ice-cold floor. There were lots of officers in the room and someone was taking photos of me. Then, one of them showed some footage of me and another brother at a bank making a deposit, and demanded to know where the money had come from, who it was being sent to, and where they lived. I was stunned. I realized these officers hadn't been surveilling and tailing me for just one or two days, and with so many officers there that day, I could see they weren't going to let go of me easily. This thought terrified me, and I silently prayed to God over and over. I recalled some of His words: **“Be not afraid; with My support, who could ever block this road? Remember this! Do not forget! All that occurs is by My good intention,**

and everything is under My observation. Can you follow My word in all that you say and do? When the trials of fire come upon you, will you kneel down and call out? Or will you cower, incapable of moving forward?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 10). I didn't feel quite so nervous or afraid knowing that I had God beside me as my support. I knew that God had permitted my arrest, that He was using this situation to test whether I had faith in and devotion to Him. I couldn't let God down, but I had to lean on Him to stand firm in my testimony and bring shame to Satan. I silently resolved that no matter how the police tortured me, I could never give away the location of the church's money, or be a Judas, even if it meant my death! When I didn't say anything, an officer gave me several hard smacks and demanded to know who our church leader was, where the church's money was kept, and who the person making the deposit with me was. He smacked me some more when I still wouldn't answer, then when his hands started hurting, he picked up my shoes and used the heels to hit me in the mouth. My mouth started swelling up pretty soon, some teeth were knocked loose, and blood was flowing from the corners of my mouth. They tortured me for more than an hour before finally letting up. They started taking shifts watching me in pairs, making me stay standing, never letting me sleep. I stood like that for three days and three nights straight. I didn't know until later that that's a torture method called "exhausting the eagle" that the police frequently use in interrogations, in which they make someone stay awake continuously until they break their spirit, and then they interrogate them when they can't think clearly. They use this tactic to get people to betray God. My whole body was unbearably sore and I was fatigued both physically and mentally. I could even fall asleep standing up, but the moment I nodded off, an officer would smack me viciously, kick me really hard, or suddenly shout right in

my ear so I'd be scared awake. I felt like my heart was going to beat right out of my chest. Sometimes I felt lucid and other times I felt dazed, and I didn't know what was real and what was a dream. I was in agony and felt like I couldn't take anymore, and I feared that if that went on, I'd be turned into an imbecile or a lunatic. I prayed to God in my heart, asking Him for the faith and strength to stand firm in testimony to Him.

One morning, a couple of officers came to question me. They said, "Don't think that you can just slide right through this by not saying anything. Once you're here, you absolutely have to answer our questions clearly! To tell you the truth, we've been following you for several months. We used a satellite positioning system to get you and we're familiar with all of your movements. By telling you to confess, we're giving you an opportunity. You have several different SIM cards and have contacts in quite a few different locations. You must be a leader, right?" Then they pulled out a record of my calls that was over a meter long, and told me to tell them what was discussed in each one. I was shocked—if the police already knew that much about me and thought I was a leader, who knows how they would torture me from here on out! I'd gone without sleep for four or five days and already felt like I couldn't take much more. I'd heard before that if you don't sleep for seven or eight days continuously, you can just die spontaneously. I wondered if I would die in there if they kept depriving me of sleep. Feeling kind of fainthearted, I quickly said a prayer: "God, my flesh is weak and I'm afraid I won't be able to withstand this, but I don't want to betray You or sell out my brothers and sisters. Please give me faith and strength." Some of God's words came to mind after my prayer: **"Faith is like a single log bridge: Those who cling abjectly to life will have difficulty in crossing it, but those who are ready to sacrifice themselves can pass over, sure of foot and worry-free. If man harbors**

timid and fearful thoughts, it is because Satan has fooled them, afraid that we will cross the bridge of faith to enter into God” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 6). His words woke me up—aren’t my life and death in God’s hands? If God doesn’t allow me to die, Satan can’t do anything to me. I was lacking faith in God; I was timid and weak because I was clinging abjectly to life. Thinking through this calmed me down a bit and I didn’t feel so afraid. Seeing I was still keeping quiet, one of the officers punched me in the head. I was seeing stars and my whole body went numb, as if I’d received an electric shock. I nearly fell over. Another officer got a wooden coat hanger and pushed it up hard against my chin. In unbearable pain, I asked them, “What law does my faith in God break? The national constitution clearly stipulates that the people have freedom of belief. What’s your basis for beating me within an inch of my life? Is there any law in this country?” One of them said, “Law in this country? What is the law? It’s the Communist Party! Now that you’re in our hands, if you don’t tell us what we want to know, don’t even think of getting out of this alive.” I was nauseated and furious to see how savage and shameless they were, and didn’t acknowledge them further.

One day a couple of officers said to me menacingly, “We have our ways to get you to open your mouth, it’s just a matter of time. Refusing to talk can only lead to more suffering. So you’re a tough eagle? Do you know how eagles are exhausted? You have to have patience, but when the time comes, that eagle will be nice and obedient....” By that point, I’d already been tortured to the point that I wasn’t very lucid and I didn’t know how many more days I could hold on. All I could do was try to force myself to stay alert and do my best to stay lucid. I kept praying and calling out to God over and over. I remembered these words of God: **“My work among the group of people of the last days is an unprecedented enterprise, and**

thus, so that My glory may fill the cosmos, all people must suffer the last hardship for Me. Do you understand My will? This is the final requirement I make of man, which is to say, I hope that all people can bear strong, resounding testimony to Me before the great red dragon, that they can offer themselves up for Me a final time, and fulfill My requirements one last instance. Can you truly do this? You were incapable of satisfying My heart in the past—could you break this pattern in the final instance? I give people the chance to reflect; I let them ponder carefully before finally giving Me an answer—is it wrong to do this? I wait for man’s response, I await his ‘letter of reply’—do you have the faith to fulfill My requirements?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 34). God’s words helped me understand that He was allowing the great red dragon to arrest and persecute me to perfect my faith and devotion. He was also giving me a chance to stand firm in my testimony to Him before Satan. God was scrutinizing my every word and action. I had to lean on God and stand firm. This thought revived my faith and strength, and I felt much more lucid, not as sleepy, and more energetic. The two officers standing off to the side commented to each other, “This guy is really something. He still has so much energy after all these days without sleep, but a dozen of us are totally worn out.” I knew that was entirely God’s mercy and protection for me, and I thanked God from my heart.

After that, they forced me to stand in a squatting position. After seven days and nights without sleep and hardly any food, where would I find the strength for that? It didn’t take long before I couldn’t hold on and I fell to the ground. They hauled me back up again to squat some more. Truly devoid of strength, I fell down twice and couldn’t hold a squat after that. Then they ordered me to kneel down facing them. I was incensed and

thought to myself: “I only kneel to worship God, and I’m absolutely not going to kneel before you demons.” When I steadfastly refused, two of them grabbed my arms in a fury and kicked my calves to force me into a kneeling position. I still wouldn’t do it, so they stepped on my calves, pressing down really hard. It hurt so much that I broke into a full-body sweat. It felt like death would have been better than that. They tortured me like that for about an hour, leaving my calves blue-green and swollen, and for a long time after that, I walked with a limp.

They still weren’t letting me sleep by the eighth day. I was feeling foggy, had a high fever and my ears were ringing. I couldn’t hear things clearly and I had double vision—I’d faint if I went just a single minute without being hit. It was still snowing outside, but the police propped me up in the bathroom and splashed biting cold water onto my head. The moment they let go I’d just collapse onto the floor. I was lucid one moment and confused the next. I was on the verge of a mental breakdown and I’d reached my physical limits, too. The thought that I had no idea when those horrific days would come to a close weakened my spirit, and I didn’t even want to eat.

On the evening of the ninth day, someone who looked like some sort of leader came in. He pointed at a bed and said, “All you have to do is tell me where that money came from, where that man who made the deposit with you is, and who the leader is. With a single word from me you’ll be able to shower and sleep, then we’ll let you go home.” I was physically exhausted to my absolute limit and I’d already fallen to the ground several times. I felt like I could die at any moment if I didn’t get some sleep. I thought to myself, “Maybe I could say something that’s not very important? If this goes on, then even if I’m not beaten to death, I’ll die from exhaustion or sleep deprivation!” But then I realized immediately that that would make

me a Judas. I quickly said a silent prayer: “God! I can’t take it anymore. Please give me faith and strength. I want to stand firm in my testimony and shame Satan.” While praying, I remembered some of God’s words: **“During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). God’s words reminded me that this was exactly when I needed to stand firm in my testimony to Him, and that this requires being able to suffer and show devotion to Him. But I didn’t want to suffer, and I was even thinking about selling out the interests of the church to preserve my own life. I was so selfish and vile—how was that having any humanity? How was that testimony? This thought restored my faith and strength. I knew that even if it meant giving up my life, I had to stand firm in my testimony and satisfy God. And so, I remained silent. Seeing this, that man with the air of a leader said to the officers watching me, “Keep an eye on him. He’s not allowed to sleep, not until he talks.” Then he turned around and walked out.

On the afternoon of the tenth day, the police arrested several sisters. They wanted to interrogate them separately and since they didn’t have enough people to watch me, that night I finally got to sleep. The next morning, a police captain surnamed Cai said, “We went to your house. Your mom’s getting old and she’s not in great health, plus, she has to take care of your two kids. Their life is really hard. Your wife isn’t at home, your kids are small, and they need their parents’ care and they really miss you. Things really are tough for your family. We figured we’d give you another chance, and you’d better take it. Yesterday we got a few more people, so just tell me

which of them is the leader, who keeps the money and where they live, and I'll let you go immediately. You'll be able to go home and reunite with your family, and we can help you find a good job in the area so you can take care of them." I couldn't hold back my tears when I heard him saying this, and I was in pain, feeling weak. My mom and kids were suffering and I had no way to help them. I felt like I was really letting them down. At that moment I realized I was in the wrong state, so I quickly prayed to God and asked Him to guide me and watch over my heart. I remembered these words of God: **"At all times, My people should be on guard against the cunning schemes of Satan, guarding the gate of My house for Me ... so as to avoid falling into Satan's trap, at which time it would be too late for regrets"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 3). God's words reminded me again that this was one of Satan's temptations. Satan was using my affections to tempt me into betraying God and selling out brothers and sisters so the police could steal the church's money and hurt God's chosen people. I couldn't fall for Satan's trick, and I would never sell them out, and drag out a shameful existence. Shortly after this, they brought the sisters in one by one to have me identify them, making them do a slow, 360-degree turn so I could see them clearly. From the corners of my eyes, I could see the three officers observing my expressions, so I prayed to God, asking Him to watch over me so I didn't betray them. I felt very calm, and for each one, I looked at them expressionlessly and slowly shook my head. Captain Cai slapped me furiously and shouted, "I don't believe you don't know a single one of them. How about you get 10 more days of the eagle treatment, then see if you behave?" Then they kept hammering me with questions about where the church's money was kept and who the leader was. I wouldn't speak, so they kept torturing me day and night, not letting me sleep at all. One of

them would slap me, kick me in my calves, pull the hair on my temples really hard, or shout with both hands cupped around my ears whenever I nodded off. They'd burst out laughing every time they saw my expression of fear and pain when I was startled awake. I was miserable, and didn't know how much longer I could withstand that living death. Especially when I recalled the police said that there was no time limit to "exhausting the eagle," and that it ended when the person confessed, I weakened even more.

By the twentieth day of my torture, I saw there was no sign of the police stopping, but I'd already reached my physical limit. Every time I fell to the floor, I didn't even have the strength to get back up or even open my eyes. My awareness was getting fuzzier and fuzzier and even breathing was difficult. I felt like I could die at any moment, and I was really scared. I heard an officer yell, "It doesn't matter if we beat diehards like you to death! We can just bury you anywhere and no one will ever know." I completely fell apart when I heard that. What would my mom, wife, and kids do if I was beaten to death? My mom was elderly and she had heart problems and high blood pressure. Wouldn't that be the end for her if I died? And how much would that hurt my wife? My kids were still so young—how would they get by? I didn't dare keep thinking about that. It felt like there was something stuck in my throat and tears rolled down my face. Right when my pain and weakness were reaching a certain point, I heard an officer say, "Just tell us where you've been staying and we'll close this case! Otherwise, we won't be able to. We don't want to stay up late and suffer alongside you here every day." I thought to myself, "If I don't tell them anything tonight, I really don't think I'll be able to get through it. Maybe I could say something inconsequential. The older sister hosting me is just a regular believer and has very little information on the church. Admitting I stayed at her house shouldn't do any real harm to the church.

Besides, it's already been 20 days since my arrest, so all those books of God's words in her house would have been moved out. If they can't find any evidence of her faith, they wouldn't do anything to an old lady, would they?" I didn't pray to God after this occurred to me, then when the police showed me a sketch of the area around my host sister's house, I told them which one it was. As soon as the words left my mouth, I became completely lucid, wide awake, and I suddenly felt a real darkness in my heart. I realized I'd been a Judas and offended God's disposition. I was terrified and dumbfounded, wracked with guilt and regret. How could I have been a Judas and sold out that sister? Then one of the police asked, "Which house is the money kept in? Who's the leader? Where are the copies of God's words printed?" One of them kicked me when I wouldn't tell them anything else. But at that point, physical pain didn't matter. The pain in my heart was a hundred times worse than the pain in my body. It was as if I'd been stabbed through the heart, and I desperately wished I could turn back time and retract what I'd just said, but it was too late. I felt like I'd lost my soul and didn't make a sound. They transferred me to a detention house, seeing they weren't going to get any information from me.

In the detention house, right in front of everyone, a corrections officer made me strip naked for an examination and took photos of me. I hadn't washed my face or brushed my teeth in 20 days, and I absolutely reeked. And in winter weather of around 10 degrees below zero, they didn't give me warm water, only letting me wash with cold water. Since I was exhausted to the point of collapse and didn't even have the strength to speak, the corrections officer kicked me violently in the chest when he thought I answered too quietly during roll call. It hurt so much it felt like all my internal organs were displaced, and it took me quite a little while to catch my breath again. They also had me recite the rules of the detention

house, and I had to wipe the floors and clean the toilets as punishment when I couldn't recite them correctly. There were cracks all over my hands that bled really easily, and every night I had to get out of bed to stand watch for two hours. I could take all that physical pain, but ever since selling out that sister, I spent my days plagued by guilt, feeling that I owed God and I owed her. I couldn't forgive myself. She'd disregarded her own personal safety to take me in, but I'd sold her out to protect myself. I didn't have any humanity! These words of God were especially poignant for me: **"Toward those who showed Me not the slightest loyalty during times of tribulation, I shall be merciful no more, for My mercy only extends so far. I have no liking, furthermore, for anyone who has once betrayed Me, much less do I like to associate with those who sell out the interests of their friends. This is My disposition, regardless of who the person may be. I must tell you this: Anyone who breaks My heart shall not receive clemency from Me a second time, and anyone who has been faithful to Me shall forever remain in My heart"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). God's words were like a knife to the heart, and made my conscience feel even more accused, like I didn't have the dignity to face God. I knew well that God's disposition is holy and righteous and tolerates no human offense, that He despises those who protect themselves at the expense of brothers and sisters, and who only want to save their own skin. I'd sold her out, becoming a shameful Judas. That was incredibly hurtful to God and was absolutely abominable to Him. Thinking about this was like having my heart ripped apart, and I couldn't sleep all night. I was mired in pain and guilt.

Captain Cai came to the detention house two more times to interrogate me on where the church's money was and who I'd shared the gospel with.

Once, he brought photographs of two sisters for me to identify, and warned me that if I didn't tell the truth, he'd make sure I got prison time. Before, I'd only wanted to save my own neck, so I'd sold out that sister and really wounded God's heart. Being punished and sent to hell wouldn't be overboard. This time, even if I got a life sentence, even if I died, I would never give up any more information. So I said without any hesitation, "I don't know them!" Then Captain Cai said emphatically, "Take a good look! Give it some thought, then answer." I repeated decisively, "I don't know them!" Seeing my determination, another officer gave me two hard smacks, leaving my face burning with pain. But this time I felt totally at peace.

Later on, I reflected on the reasons for my failure. One part of it was that I was too caught up in my affections, so when the police tortured me and threatened my life, I couldn't let go of my mother, children, or wife, afraid that they wouldn't be able to go on if I died, unable to withstand that blow. I had betrayed God and sold out that sister for my carnal affections, becoming a treacherous, shameful Judas. I really lacked all humanity! Actually, my family's fates were all in God's hands, and how much torment and pain they were going to suffer in life had already been determined by God. Even if I didn't die and I could stay by their sides, I had no way to change how much they were bound to suffer. I hadn't seen this, but I was held back by my feelings. This was really foolish. Another aspect of it was that I didn't fully understand the significance of death. I couldn't bear to part with life, which meant I didn't remotely have genuine faith in God. By the twentieth day of the exhaustion torture, my awareness was getting cloudier, I was struggling to breathe, and I felt like I could die at any moment. I was really scared, afraid my time had come. I thought of all those saints throughout the ages who had worked to spread the gospel of the Lord. Some were stoned to death, some were beheaded, and some were

crucified. They were all persecuted for the sake of righteousness and their deaths were all testimonies of triumph over Satan, of disgracing Satan, and were commemorated by God. Though they died in the flesh, their souls are in God's hands. I recalled the Lord Jesus saying: **"Whoever will save his life shall lose it: and whoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it"** (Matthew 16:25). I had been arrested and tortured because of my faith. This was suffering persecution for a righteous cause. If the police really had beaten me to the point of disability or death, that would have been a thing of glory. Thinking through this gave me a real sense of release, and I resolved that no matter how much I suffered after that, even if I had to give my life, I would stand firm in my testimony to God, atone for my past transgression, and absolutely not continue living in such disgrace.

Late January 2003 came around, and it had been nearly two months since my arrest. I'd lost more than 30 pounds, and when they let detainees outside to get some air, I could only do a few laps around the courtyard before I was left gasping for breath. I was in a really frail state and the officials were afraid I'd die on their hands, so they ended up giving me just an 18-month sentence that could be served outside of prison. After my release, I was required to call the Public Security Bureau twice a month and report on my whereabouts, and report to them on my ideology every three months. After I got home, all my unbeliever family and friends came to gang up on me and scold me. I felt really awful. In prison I'd been tortured by the great red dragon to within an inch of my life, and now that I was back home, I had to tolerate my family's misunderstandings. All I could do was swallow that bitter pill. I later discovered that after my arrest, the police had gone to search my home and they had deceived my family, saying things like I'd been engaged in fraudulent activities to make money. I was furious. The police had arrested and tortured me, pushed me into being a

Judas and selling out a sister, and even fabricated lies to stir up trouble and get my family to reject me. I hated those Communist Party demons with every fiber of my being!

It wasn't long before the police were after me again, so I had to go on the run. I became one of the CCP's wanted fugitives. I had to do odd jobs under fake names, with a home I had no way of returning to. I also lost contact with the church. Being pursued by the police, rejected by my family, and not even able to live a life of the church was extraordinarily painful for me. The incident of being a Judas and selling out that sister, in particular, felt like a brand on my heart. I constantly felt like I'd committed an unforgivable sin, that my path of faith had already come to its end, and that I had no chance of being saved anymore. These thoughts left me in agony and feeling feeble.

I reestablished contact with the church in May 2008 and took on a duty again. I read this in God's words after that: **"Each person who has submitted to being conquered by God's words will have ample opportunity for salvation; God's salvation of each of these people will show His utmost leniency. In other words, they will be shown the utmost tolerance. As long as people turn back from the wrong path, and as long as they can repent, God will give them opportunities to obtain His salvation"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Put Aside the Blessings of Status and Understand God's Will to Bring Salvation to Man). **"God's handling of each person is based in the actual situations of that person's circumstances and background at the time, as well as in that person's actions and behavior and their nature essence. God will never wrong anyone. This is one side of God's righteousness. For example, Eve was seduced by the serpent into eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but Jehovah did not reproach her by**

saying, 'I told you not to eat it, so why did you do it anyway? You should have had discernment; you should have known that the serpent spoke only to seduce you.' Jehovah did not reprimand Eve like that. Because humans are God's creation, He knows what their instincts are and what those instincts are capable of, to what extent people can control themselves, and how far people can go. God knows all this quite clearly. God's handling of a person is not as simple as people imagine. When His attitude toward a person is one of loathing or revulsion, or when it comes to what this person says in a given context, He has a good understanding of their states. This is because God scrutinizes man's heart and essence. People are always thinking, 'God has only His divinity. He is righteous and brooks no offense from man. He doesn't consider man's difficulties or put Himself in people's shoes. If a person should resist God, He will punish them.' That is not how things are at all. If that is how someone understands His righteousness, His work, and His treatment of people, they are gravely mistaken. God's determination of each person's outcome is not based in man's notions and imaginings, but in God's righteous disposition. He will repay each person according to what they have done. God is righteous, and sooner or later, He will see to it that all people are convinced, through and through" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Reading these words from God moved me to the point where I couldn't hold back my tears. I was like a child that had committed a horrible wrong and didn't dare return home, finally returned to his mother's embrace after years of wandering out in the world. I could truly feel the benevolence of God's essence. I had sold out that sister and betrayed God, so I deserved punishment, but God didn't treat me in accordance with my transgression. He gave me a chance to repent. I could see that God's disposition not only

contains judgment and wrath, but also mercy and tolerance. God is incredibly principled in His treatment of people. He doesn't delimit them according to their momentary transgressions, but according to the nature and context of their actions, and their stature at that time. If someone is treacherous because of human weakness, but they're not denying or betraying God from their heart and after the fact they can still repent to God, God can still forgive them and allow them another chance. I saw how righteous God's disposition is. God hates mankind's corrupt disposition and betrayals, but He still does His utmost to save us. This left me overflowing with gratitude toward God and I felt even more indebted to Him. I'd hurt God way too much and I really wanted to smack myself. I resolved that no matter what my outcome was, I would treasure this God-given chance, seek the truth, and perform my duty to repay God's love.

After undergoing the CCP's brutal torture, I saw its demonic essence and evil face of hating and opposing God, through and through. I hate Satan more than ever! I also personally experienced that God's work to save mankind is so practical and wise—He used the great red dragon to perfect my faith and devotion, allowing me to gain some understanding of God's righteous disposition and see the authority and power of God's words. This whole experience has shown me that hardship and trials are God's blessing for me, and it's also His love and salvation! No matter what sort of oppression or adversity I may face in the future, I'm utterly determined to follow God until the end!

62. Awakening From My Arrogance

By Johnny, Italy

I started working on spreading the gospel in 2015, and had some success under God's guidance. Sometimes those I preached to had strong notions and didn't want to investigate any further into the gospel. So I prayed and relied on God and patiently fellowshiped with them on the truth, and they'd quickly accept God's work of the last days. After some success in my duty, I felt better than the other brothers and sisters, like I was some sort of rare talent.

Then my partner Liam and I each took on watering work for a church. The church I took on was large and had quite a few members, so when I started, I was always praying to and relying on God and discussing things with brothers and sisters. Things started going well before long. Most brothers and sisters were attending gatherings on a regular basis and were really proactive in their duties. I was quite pleased with myself. I was thinking that even with such a large church and so many members, I was getting results so quickly, so it seemed like I must have a bit of caliber. I also saw that Liam's watering work wasn't going too well, that some waterers in his church were unsuitable and their duty needed to be adjusted, and some needed fellowship because they were in a negative state. So, I looked down on him a bit and thought he could only resolve these problems with my help. After that, I started getting involved with his work, summing up mistakes and flaws with everyone in gatherings, fellowshiping on God's words to help with others' negative states, and adjusting the duties of unfit members. The work picked up pretty quickly. Seeing how quickly I had solved our problems, I felt even more indispensable and like some sort of rare talent. After this my arrogance just grew and grew. I'd often complain

about the brothers and sisters not putting heart into their duties and scold them, saying: “There’s been such a delay in watering work. Is there a single person paying heed to God’s will and doing the work properly? You’ve all been so irresponsible and sloppy. It’s a good thing there’s been a little progress these past couple weeks, otherwise who could take responsibility for this delay?” No one dared say a word. I wondered if my reaction was inappropriate, but then I thought that they wouldn’t care unless I took a strong tone. Because I often looked down on my brothers and sisters, and scolded them and made them do as I said when I found problems and deviations in their work, over time they distanced themselves from me and usually never talked to me about anything except work-related matters. Sometimes they’d be talking and laughing together, but as soon as I showed up, they just scattered, as if they were afraid of me. And since they were afraid of messing up and being scolded, they’d first ask me whenever something came up, and wait for my decision. I did feel kind of uneasy when I saw the situation. I wondered if I was being authoritarian and walking the path of an antichrist. But then I thought I needed to be firm in work. No one would listen if I weren’t a little hard on them. Then how would we get anywhere? I felt like directly calling out problems was me having a sense of righteousness. After that, my arrogance became even more intense and I had to have the final say in everything, large or small, and had to follow up on how members were allocated and arranged, because I felt like no one on the team was as capable as me. Even when I did discuss things with them, we always ended up doing what I wanted, so if I decided right away, I thought we could save time. Sometimes my leader came to a gathering, and I thought nothing of him, thinking, “So what if you’re a leader? Can you share the gospel and bear witness? Can you do a good job of even one aspect of this work? If you can only fellowship in

gatherings, without getting practical work done, you are no match for me.” So whenever the leader asked me how our work was going, I would share more when I felt like talking, but when I didn’t feel like talking I’d just throw him a couple of words. I thought there was no need to talk about it, because at the end of the day I was the one who was going to be doing the work. The leader exposed my arrogance, saying I always had final say on matters and that I didn’t work well with the brothers and sisters. Dealt with and pruned in this way, I acknowledged to his face that I was arrogant, but I didn’t pay it any real mind. I thought I had good caliber and that I was capable—so as long as I did my work well, what did it matter if I was a little arrogant? Besides, I was the one heading up most of the church’s work, so what were they going to do—fire me? I didn’t remotely accept the leader’s dealing with me and pruning me and kept on doing my duty exactly the way I pleased, fully in charge, until I was exposed by God.

One time, a newly-established church needed more people doing watering, and without discussing it with Liam and the others, I just arranged for a sister to go help them out. I figured that generally they agreed with what I suggested, so it was fine for me to decide on my own. But I was surprised to find out that because this sister’s understanding of the truth was too superficial, she wasn’t capable of the work and couldn’t solve practical problems. This was a serious hindrance to the church’s work and she later had to be reassigned to another duty. But I still didn’t reflect on myself. After, because of my unrelenting arrogance and my failure to seek truth principles in my duty, or to guide the others to follow principles in their duty, everyone was just busy running to and fro without any real results. It really hindered our work progress. Even so, I was still totally unaware of my own problems—I just blamed the others for not shouldering their burdens. For a while I had this indescribable sense of foreboding, like

something terrible was about to happen. I didn't know what to say in gatherings or prayers, and I was often getting sleepy in work meetings, and didn't have insight into anything. I was feeling mentally fuzzy and didn't have energy for anything, but just wanted to rest. I knew that I'd lost the work of the Holy Spirit, but I didn't know why. I prayed to God, asking Him to help me understand myself.

A few days later, my leader came to a gathering and dealt with me and exposed my behavior. He said, "You've been arrogant. You're always haughtily scolding people, constraining them, and often flaunting your seniority. You don't listen to anyone and you're hard to work with. Furthermore, you do whatever you want without discussing with anyone else, you're arbitrary and autocratic. Based on your behavior, we've decided to dismiss you." Every word of his cut straight to my heart. I thought back over how I'd been acting. I'd only ever gone my own way and had been dictatorial. Wasn't that just like an antichrist? That thought really scared me and I thought to myself: "Am I being exposed and cast out by God? Is this how my years of faith are going to end?" For a few days, I felt like a zombie. I was filled with fear from the moment I woke up, and I just didn't know how to face the day. I prayed to God, saying, "God, I know Your benevolent will is in this, but I don't know how to get through it. Oh God, I'm so depressed. Please enlighten me to know Your will." Then I read these words of God: **"God is not concerned with what happens to you each day, or how much work you do, how much effort you put in—what He looks at is what your attitude toward these things is. And what does the attitude with which you do these things, and the way you do them, relate to? It relates to whether or not you pursue the truth, and also to your life entry. God looks at your life entry, at the path that you walk. If you walk the path of pursuing the truth, and you have life**

entry, you will be able to cooperate harmoniously with others when you perform your duties, and you will easily perform your duties in a way that is adequate. But if, while performing your duty, you constantly emphasize that you have capital, that you understand your line of work, that you have experience, and are mindful of God's will, and pursue the truth more than anyone else, and if you then think that because of these things, you are qualified to have the final say, and you don't discuss anything with anyone else, and are always a law unto yourself, and engage in your own management, and always want to be 'the only flower in bloom,' then do you walk the path of life entry? No—this is the pursuit of status, it is walking the path of Paul, it is not the path of life entry” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). “There was a person who had been spreading the gospel for a few years and had some experience at it. They suffered a lot of hardship while spreading the gospel, and were even incarcerated and sentenced to many years in prison. After getting out, they continued to spread the gospel, and won over several hundred people, some of whom turned out to be significant talents; some were even chosen as leaders or workers. As a result, this person believed themselves to be worthy of great accolades, and used this as capital that they bragged about wherever they went, showing off and testifying to themselves: ‘I went to prison for eight years, and I stood firm in my testimony. I have won over many people while spreading the gospel, some of whom are now leaders or workers. In the house of God, I deserve credit, I have made a contribution.’ No matter where they were spreading the gospel, they were sure to brag to the local leaders or workers. They would also say, ‘You must listen to what I say; even your senior leaders must be polite when they speak to me. I’ll teach a lesson

to anyone who isn't!' This person is a bully, are they not? If someone like this had not spread the gospel and won over those people, would they dare to be so pompous? They would indeed. That they can be so pompous proves that this is in their nature. It is their nature essence. They become so arrogant that they lack all sense. After spreading the gospel and winning over a few people, their arrogant nature swells, and they become even more pompous. Such people brag about their capital wherever they go, they try to claim credit wherever they go, and even put pressure on leaders at various levels, trying to be on an equal footing with them, and even thinking that they themselves ought to be senior leaders. Based on what is manifested by the behavior of someone like this, we should all be clear about just what kind of nature they have, and what their end is likely to be. When a demon infiltrates the house of God, they do a little service before showing their true colors; they don't listen no matter who deals with or prunes them, and they persist in fighting against the house of God. What is the nature of their actions? In the eyes of God, they are courting death, and they will not rest until they have killed themselves. This is the only appropriate way of putting it" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). Reading these words of God made me tremble with fear. It felt like God was exposing me, face-to-face, revealing my state and the deepest secrets that I'd never told a single person. I'd had some results in these years of sharing the gospel, so I thought I'd made an enormous contribution, that I was a rare talent, and I often kept an inner score of everything I'd done. I felt like I deserved some credit and I was a pillar in the church. I took these things as personal capital, arrogantly looking down on everyone. I also had liked to disdainfully scold people, which was constraining for brothers and sisters. I

had had to have the final say on everything and wasn't cooperative in my duty, and was instead autocratic and did whatever I wanted, seriously delaying and hindering the church's work. Even when the leader dealt with me I paid it no mind. I even flaunted my seniority. I looked down on him and thought he wasn't any better than me. I didn't want to accept his supervision or guidance. I wanted to decide everything on my own. I dressed brothers and sisters down when they didn't live up to my expectations, saying things like "You'll be dismissed and cast out if you don't do your duty well." That kept them obsessed with work, afraid of being dealt with or losing their duty if they slipped up, and living in an incorrect state. How was that doing a duty? Wasn't it doing evil, resisting God? That thought really scared me. I never imagined I'd do such evil, that I would constrain and wound brothers and sisters so much, that I would hinder and disrupt our work to that degree. I was fighting against God, but thought I was doing my duty to satisfy Him. I was so blind, ignorant, and irrational! I saw in God's words that acting that way is courting death. In God's phrase "**courting death**," I got a sense of how revolted, disgusted, and sickened God is by that kind of person. It was heart-wrenching, as if God had condemned me to death. I thought I was able to sacrifice everything for my duty, that I'd always been successful in it, so God was sure to approve of me and a little bit of arrogance hardly mattered. But then I realized if I didn't pursue the truth and failed to have dispositional change, then no matter how much I sacrificed or how much I achieved in my duty, I was just a service-doer. The judgment and revelation of God's words showed me His righteous disposition that cannot be offended. I saw that God is perfectly principled in His actions. If a person accomplishes some things out in the world, they may have some capital and leverage. But in God's house, the truth and righteousness hold sway. Using capital and

leverage in the church is putting yourself to death and it offends God's disposition.

Later, I was pondering why I felt I had some capital and started getting so reckless, arrogant and dictatorial after achieving a few things in my duty. What kind of nature was I being controlled by? I read this in God's words: **"If, in your heart, you truly understand the truth, then you will know how to practice the truth and obey God, and will naturally embark on the path of pursuing the truth. If the path you walk is the right one, and in line with God's will, then the work of the Holy Spirit will not leave you—in which case there will be less and less chance of you betraying God. Without the truth, it is easy to do evil, and you will do it despite yourself. For example, if you have an arrogant and conceited disposition, then being told not to oppose God makes no difference, you can't help yourself, it is beyond your control. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature. Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account; they would cause you to exalt yourself, constantly put yourself on display; they would make you scorn others, they would leave no one in your heart but yourself; they would rob you of God's place in your heart, and ultimately cause you to sit in the place of God and demand that people submit to you, and make you venerate your own thoughts, ideas, and notions as the truth. So much evil is done by people under the dominance of their arrogant and conceited nature!"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). **"There are many kinds of corrupt dispositions that are included within the disposition of Satan, but the one that is most obvious and that stands out the most is an arrogant disposition.**

Arrogance is the root of man's corrupt disposition. The more arrogant people are, the more irrational they are, and the more irrational they are, the more liable they are to resist God. How serious is this problem? Not only do people with an arrogant disposition consider everyone else beneath them, but, worst of all, they are even condescending toward God, and they have no God-fearing hearts. Even though people might appear to believe in God and follow Him, they do not treat Him as God at all. They always feel that they possess the truth and think the world of themselves. This is the essence and root of the arrogant disposition, and it comes from Satan. Therefore, the problem of arrogance must be resolved. Feeling that one is better than others—that is a trivial matter. The critical issue is that one's arrogant disposition prevents one from submitting to God, His rule, and His arrangements; such a person always feels inclined to compete with God for power and control others. This sort of person does not have a God-fearing heart in the slightest, to say nothing of loving God or submitting to Him. People who are arrogant and conceited, especially those who are so arrogant as to have lost their sense, cannot submit to God in their belief in Him, and even exalt and bear testimony for themselves. Such people resist God the most and have absolutely no God-fearing hearts. If people wish to get to where they have God-fearing hearts, then they must first resolve their arrogant disposition. The more thoroughly you resolve your arrogant disposition, the more you will have a God-fearing heart, and only then can you submit to Him and obtain the truth and know Him. Only those who gain the truth are genuinely human” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words taught me that the root of defiance and opposition to God is arrogance. When someone has an arrogant nature, they can't stop themselves from opposing God and doing

evil. Reflecting on what I revealed during this period of time, it was subject to the control of an arrogant nature. I was walking on air after achieving a few things, thinking I was of good caliber, was capable, that I was a rare talent, and that the church couldn't do without me. I looked down on other brothers and sisters, often using my position to scold and constrain them, thinking nothing of them. I was dictatorial and arbitrary in my duty, not discussing anything with anyone else. I felt like I was fine on my own and I could make decisions unilaterally. I was incredibly arrogant and had no God-fearing heart at all. When the leader dealt with me, I did acknowledge my arrogance, but I didn't truly care about it. I even felt like there wasn't anything wrong with arrogance, thinking that being called that meant I had some skills. If I didn't have some capital, why would I be arrogant? I was incredibly unreasonable and totally shameless. I was living by Satan's poison of "In all the universe, only I reign supreme," acting like king of the hill in the church, and I alone had final say on everything. How was I any different from the dictatorship of great red dragon? The great red dragon is arrogant and lawless, resorting to unprecedented means of violent repression against anyone who doesn't listen to it. I was dictatorial and intractable in the church, not accepting anyone's oversight. Wasn't that kind of disposition just like the great red dragon? Only then did I realize how arrogant I had been, that I hadn't cared about anyone else or even God, that I was unconsciously going against the truth, vying against God, and that I was on a path against God. If I didn't repent, I'd definitely end up cursed and punished by God just like the great red dragon. Then it was really clear for me to see how serious the consequences of my arrogant nature were, that my problem wasn't as simple as the exposure of a little corruption, as I had thought before. That thought reminded me of when I'd scolded and belittled others and elevated myself, that I spoke and presented myself as if

I was unequaled in the world. I felt nauseated and disgusted by myself. I resolved that I had to start pursuing the truth properly, seeking principles in everything, have a God-fearing heart, and to stop living by my arrogant nature and resisting God.

Later on, when I was seeking how to appropriately approach any successes I might have in my duties, I read God's words: **"Are you able to sense the guidance of God and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit in the course of performing your duty? (Yes.) If you are able to sense the work of the Holy Spirit, yet still think highly of yourselves, and think you are possessed of reality, then what is going on here? (When our performance of our duty has borne some fruit, we think that half the credit belongs to God, and half belongs to us. We magnify our cooperation to an unlimited extent, thinking that nothing was more important than our cooperation, and that God's enlightenment would not have been possible without it.) So why did God enlighten you? Can God enlighten other people as well? (Yes.) When God enlightens someone, it is by the grace of God. And what is that little bit of cooperation on your part? Is it something you are due credit for, or is it your duty and responsibility? (It is our duty and responsibility.) When you recognize that it is your duty and responsibility, then you have the right mindset, and will not think of trying to take credit for it. If you always think, 'This is my contribution. Would God's enlightenment have been possible without my cooperation? This task requires man's cooperation; our cooperation accounts for the bulk of the accomplishment,' then you are wrong. How could you cooperate if the Holy Spirit had not enlightened you, and if no one had fellowshiped the truth principles to you? You would not know what God requires, nor would you know the path of practice. Even if you wanted to obey God and cooperate, you wouldn't**

know how. Is this ‘cooperation’ of yours not just empty words? Without true cooperation, you are only acting according to your own ideas—in which case, could the duty you perform be up to standard? Absolutely not, which indicates the issue at hand. What is the issue? No matter what duty a person performs, whether they achieve results, perform their duty up to standard, and gain God’s approval depends on God’s actions. Even if you fulfill your responsibilities and duty, if God does not work, if God does not enlighten and guide you, then you won’t know your path, your direction, or your goals. What ultimately comes of that? After toiling for all that time, you will not have performed your duty properly, nor will you have gained the truth and life—it will all have been in vain. Therefore, your duty being performed up to standard, edifying your brothers and sisters, and obtaining God’s approval all depends on God! People can only do those things that they are personally capable of, that they ought to do, and that are within their inherent capabilities—nothing more. Ultimately then, performing your duties in an effective manner depends on the guidance of God’s words and the enlightenment and leadership of the Holy Spirit; only then can you understand the truth, and complete God’s commission according to the path that God has given you and the principles He has set. This is God’s grace and blessing, and if people cannot see this, they are blind” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One’s Conduct). From God’s words, I understood that my achieving some things in my duty was entirely because of God’s grace and the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment and guidance. God became flesh and expressed the truth to water and supply man, fellowshiped clearly and concretely on all aspects of the truth principles. Only then did I understand some truths, gain direction in my duty, and have a path of

practice, and it was not at all because I had good caliber or could do some work. Without the guidance of God's words or the Holy Spirit's enlightenment, no matter my caliber or how well-spoken I was, I'd never achieve anything. And this little bit of work I had done was me doing the duty of a created being. It was my responsibility. Whatever duty it is, it's what a created being should do. Anything accomplished is just what should be done, and should not be our personal contribution or capital. However, I didn't know what I was made of. I thought a few achievements meant my caliber was good and that I was good at what I did, and took that as something I could leverage. I was so pleased with myself, trying to steal God's glory. I was so arrogant and unreasonable! In fact, thinking back on it, not only did I fail to accomplish anything when I was working from my arrogance, but I often delayed our work. Like when I recklessly put the wrong person into a watering position, which left lots of newcomers unable to get the watering and sustenance they needed in time, seriously disrupting the work of the church. At the same time, I wasn't entering into truth principles or leading the others to follow principles in their duty. That meant we weren't accomplishing things in our work and it delayed our progress. But I'd never reflected on all of that. Instead, I congratulated myself and became more arrogant, feeling that the work of the church couldn't spare me. But if God could enlighten me, of course He could enlighten others, so couldn't the church's work go on as usual after my dismissal? I thought the church couldn't do without me because I was so arrogant and ignorant. I thought of Paul in the Age of Grace. He thought he had some capital after doing some work, so didn't think anything of others. He directly said he was no less than the greatest disciple, and he often belittled Peter. In the end, he tried to use his work to ask God for a reward, a crown. He was arrogant to the point of losing reason. Was I not just like

Paul? I was on the same path as him. Without the judgment and revelation of God's words, I'd still be oblivious to my problems, thinking I was great. Seeing all of this, I really hated myself. I wanted to confess and repent to God.

Then I read a passage of God's words: **"Does anyone know how many years God has been working in the midst of humanity and all creation? The specific number of years for which God has been working and managing all of humanity is unknown; no one can give a precise figure, and God doesn't report these matters to humanity. However, if Satan were to do something like this, would it report it? It certainly would. It wants to show itself off to mislead more people and make more people aware of its contributions. Why doesn't God report these matters? There is a humble and hidden aspect to God's essence. What is the opposite of being humble and hidden? It's being arrogant and displaying oneself. ... Guiding mankind, God carries out such great work, and He presides over the entire universe. His authority and power are so vast, yet He has never said, 'My power is extraordinary.' He remains hidden among all things, presiding over everything, nourishing and providing for humankind, allowing all humankind to continue for generation after generation. Take the air and the sunshine, for example, or all the material things necessary for human existence on earth—they all flow forth without cease. That God provides for man is beyond question. If Satan did something good, would it keep it quiet, and remain an unsung hero? Never. It's like how there are some antichrists in the church who previously undertook dangerous work, who forsook things and endured suffering, who may have even gone to prison; there are also some who once contributed to one aspect of the work of the house of God. They never forget these things, they think**

they deserve lifelong credit for them, they think these are their lifetime's capital—which shows how small people are! People are truly small, and Satan is shameless” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part Two)). **“God loves mankind, cares for mankind, and shows concern for mankind, as well as constantly and unceasingly providing for mankind. He never feels in His heart that this is additional work or something that deserves a lot of credit. Nor does He feel that saving humanity, supplying them, and granting them everything, is making a huge contribution to mankind. He simply provides for mankind quietly and silently, in His own way and through His own essence and what He has and is. No matter how much provision and how much help mankind receives from Him, God never thinks about or tries to take credit. This is determined by the essence of God, and is also precisely a true expression of God's disposition”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself I). I pondered God's words and saw how benevolent His disposition and essence are! God is the Creator who rules and sustains absolutely everything. He has become flesh again, expressing truths to save mankind, paying a great price for us. However, He has never thought of this as a huge contribution to mankind. He's never talked up or boasted about anything. He just quietly does all His own work. God's life essence is so benevolent and without any sort of arrogance or showing off. He is worthy of our love and eternal praise. I am an insignificant human, nothing at all, but I was still so arrogant, always wanting the final say in things. I was dizzy with the tiniest bit of success, as if it were some sort of magnum opus, some sort of great contribution. I looked down on everyone and had to have things my way. I was so unreasonable and superficial. God is so humble and hidden, and has such a benevolent essence, which makes me feel even more strongly how

sickening and disgusting my arrogant disposition was and makes me truly long to learn the truth to get rid of it soon, to live out a human likeness.

Then, during a gathering once, I read this passage in God's words. God says: **"Today God judges you, chastises you, and condemns you, but you must know that the point of your condemnation is for you to know yourself. He condemns, curses, judges, and chastises so that you might know yourself, so that your disposition might change, and, moreover, so that you might know your worth, and see that all of God's actions are righteous and in accordance with His disposition and the requirements of His work, that He works in accordance with His plan for man's salvation, and that He is the righteous God who loves, saves, judges, and chastises man"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Put Aside the Blessings of Status and Understand God's Will to Bring Salvation to Man). Reading this, I was really moved by God's words and understood His will a little better. I was doing my duty relying on a corrupt disposition, disrupting the work, so I was dismissed by the church based on principles. I thought God was exposing and casting me out, and I figured He was condemning me and that I couldn't be saved. I finally realized that being dismissed was not being exposed or cast out. That dismissal curbed the evil steps I was taking in good time. It made me aware of my corrupt disposition and showed me that I was on the wrong path. This was God's salvation and most genuine love for me.

After that, I exposed and dissected myself in a gathering about how I'd been arrogant in my duty before, how I'd hurt brothers and sisters, and how I'd reflected after being dismissed. I initially thought everyone would be disgusted with me when they saw how inhumane I had been and wouldn't want anything to do with me, but surprisingly they didn't come down on me. I felt even more indebted to them then. I'd been hurting everyone with

my arrogant disposition, I had been so inhumane. Later, when I took up a duty with brothers and sisters again, I was a lot more low-key. I stopped looking down on brothers and sisters or turning my nose up at them for their faults, and I could treat them properly. I also made a conscious effort to listen to others' suggestions on issues and stopped trusting myself too much and acting arbitrarily. I had a good change in my state after a little while and was appointed as a supervisor again. I knew deep down that it was God uplifting and gracing me with that. I thought back on how I'd been arrogant in my duty before, and how I had disrupted and hindered the work of the church and the life entry of the brothers and sisters, and how the church still gave me another chance to do such an important duty. I truly experienced God's mercy and leniency. In my duty after that, I stopped relying on my own arrogant disposition to act arbitrarily, but I had somewhat of a God-fearing heart, and was constantly praying to Him in my duties. When I encountered a problem I couldn't deal with, I discussed it with the others so we could seek truth principles together. After doing that for a little while, I realized that our whole team's performance had improved quite a bit. When I was doing everything on my own, and hadn't partnered or discussed things with the others, it was really exhausting for me. There were a lot of things I wasn't taking into account or considering fully, so we didn't get good results. But now that I discuss issues that come up with my brothers and sisters and we make up for one another's shortcomings with each other's strengths, it's so much easier to resolve problems. By cooperating with the others, I could see they really do have some strengths. Some of them pay attention to seeking the truth in their duties and operate in accordance with principles. Some may not have a lot of caliber, but they are diligent and uphold the work of the church. Those are strengths I don't have. Before, I always thought that I was superior to

and stronger than others, often elevating myself and scolding them, making everyone feel constrained and estranged from me, which was painful for me. Now I know that I am just a created being, a corrupt human, and that there is nothing that makes me stand out from everyone else. I interact normally and cooperate harmoniously with the brothers and sisters. I can learn from the strengths of my brothers and sisters to make up for my own faults. It's a much more free and easy way to live.

About a year later, our leader arranged for a summary meeting so everyone could fellowship on what they'd learned and experienced over that year. I listened in silence, thinking over what I'd gained in the year. Then I realized that God had saved me by having me replaced. If it hadn't been for that, I still wouldn't see how serious my arrogant nature was, that I was smug and arbitrary just because I had some gifts, and I would still not have realized that I was resisting God. It was God's discipline and the revelation of God's words that allowed me to know my arrogant nature. This also taught me a bit about God's righteous disposition and made me have somewhat of a God-fearing heart. I'm so grateful for God's salvation!

63. Freed From the Burden of Returning Kindness

By Zheng Li, China

My father passed away when I was nine, and my mother was left to raise me and my four brothers and sisters in difficult circumstances. My aunt felt bad for us and would often bring us food and other necessities. Whenever she brought anything over, my mother would make sure we all showered her with gratitude, and taught us to never forget the good deeds of others, to gratefully repay kindness received and be thankful people, so that no one would denounce us and call us ungrateful behind our backs. Despite being up against hard times, my mom would always share what little we had with my aunt to repay her kindness. When I was older, I would often hear people say: “Did you see that so-and-so who received assistance when they most needed it repaid that kindness a few years later? Did you see that so-and-so that received help but has no conscience and fails to show gratitude? He is a thankless wretch.” Gradually, I also came to live by this viewpoint, thinking that I had to conduct myself by repaying kindness received, otherwise I would be ungrateful, and would be disdained and looked down on by others. After becoming a believer, despite knowing that I should handle people and things based on God’s words, traditional ideas passed down from generation to generation were rooted deep in my heart, to the point where I lived by these views and violated the principles in my duty, which led me to disrupt the church’s work and be marked for a transgression.

In August 2021, after the church’s cleansing work arrangements were issued, the church began fellowship on the truth of discerning people and my older sister-in-law, Fang Ling, was identified as a nonbeliever. I wasn’t

surprised at this at all. Despite being a believer for years, she didn't pursue the truth and often disrupted church life. During gatherings she would always gossip about others, and then nod off as soon as we started reading God's words. After reading, she would have nothing to fellowship. When she encountered issues that didn't accord with her notions, she never sought the truth and never accepted the issues from God. She was always scrutinizing people and things and defending herself. When she was a gathering host, and heard the leader fellowshiping on the disruptive behavior of certain people, she would tell those people what the leader said, which led them to develop biases against the leader and think the leader was giving them a hard time. The leader dissected how she was sowing discord and disrupting and disturbing church life, but she didn't feel culpable at all and even made all kinds of arguments to defend herself. She said she was just telling the truth and didn't see how that disrupted church life. During one gathering, we fellowshiped on discernment of my older brother's wife, Liu Hui; she was exposed as a nonbeliever with evil humanity that should be cleansed from the church immediately. After the meeting, Fang Ling went and told a sister that we were cleansing Liu Hui from the church, and made some negative comments, which disrupted that sister's state. I hurriedly sought Fang Ling out to fellowship with her, sharing this with her: The church cleanses and expels people based on their overall behavior, God's house is ruled by the truth and no one person has the final say. Liu Hui was being cleansed, because she had evil humanity, often disrupted church life, and refused to repent even after multiple rounds of fellowship from brothers and sisters. I also exposed how Fang Ling's behavior spread negativity and death and denied the fact that the truth and righteousness hold authority in the church. To my surprise she tearfully replied: "I know you have the last say in the church and decide who gets expelled." I felt a

bit helpless in the face of her unreasonable troublemaking, and I knew in my heart that Fang Ling didn't accept the truth and was a nonbeliever. But as I was preparing materials for her cleansing, I hesitated. She and I had accepted God's last days' work together, and we had gathered and spread the gospel together for years. Fang Ling was very warm-hearted and would do everything she could to help me when I needed it. In 2013, especially, when my husband fell ill, she would look after him so that I could continue doing my duty. She also helped me with chores and tending to our crops. After my husband passed, I had to deal with all kinds of hardships, and I fell into a state of negativity. It was Fang Ling that came to see me every night, read God's words with me, and fellowshiped with me on Job's experiences. With her support and accompaniment, my state slowly improved. In that most trying of times, she not only helped me with everyday practicalities, but also read God's words to encourage me. I had always remembered how well Fang Ling treated me. If I didn't repay her kindness and even prepared materials for her cleansing, what would she think of me if she found out? Would she say that I was ungrateful and had no conscience? My brother, his wife, and my sisters had all seen everything that she had done for me these years. Even my neighbors said Fang Ling was closer to me than my actual sisters. As the saying goes, "Lambs kneel to receive milk from their mothers, and crows repay their mothers by feeding them," even animals know to repay kindness, whereas I couldn't even show leniency to someone who had helped me. Would they think I was ungrateful and abandon and isolate me? Wouldn't I then be cast aside by my own family? Realizing all this, I felt extremely anxious and indecisive. Between the church's cleansing work and Fang Ling, to whom I owed a debt of kindness, I couldn't decide, and lived in agony and suffering. In the midst of my indecision, I saw this in a sermon from the

brother superior: “What kind of people can remain to render service in the church? As long as they do not have evil humanity, are skilled at spreading the gospel and willing to do so, they should be allowed to remain in the church.” I suddenly realized: “Right! Fang Ling doesn’t love or pursue the truth, but she likes to spread the gospel and can achieve some results. Now is a crucial moment for expanding the gospel, if I cite Fang Ling’s ability to spread the gospel as a reason to let her stay in the church, won’t she avoid being cleansed? That way, I can avoid offending Fang Ling, and my brother, his wife and my sisters won’t say I am ungrateful, and I won’t become notorious for being a thankless sister.” Realizing this, I just pushed the work of preparing her cleansing materials to the side.

However, not soon after, some sisters told me that there were two potential gospel recipients that had good caliber and comprehension of God’s words, but Fang Ling lived out such poor humanity that the two potential gospel recipients were put off and stopped listening to sermons. Another sister told me that Fang Ling was disrupting church life and that some people didn’t want to spread the gospel with her.... I was shocked when I heard all this. Fang Ling’s disruption of the gospel work was directly related to my own decision-making! I hurriedly prayed to God repenting and confessing my sins. Afterward, I came across this passage of God’s words: **“Some people are exceedingly cavalier in their attitudes toward the Above’s work arrangements. They believe, ‘The Above makes the work arrangements, and we do the work in the church. Some words and affairs can be implemented flexibly. It’s up to us how, specifically, they’re to be done. The Above just speaks and makes the work arrangements; we’re the ones taking practical action. So, after the Above hands the work off to us, we can do it as we like. It’s fine, however it gets done. No one has the right to interfere.’ The principles**

they act on are as follows: They listen to what they believe is right and ignore what they believe is wrong, they consider their beliefs to be the truth and the principles, they resist whatever does not accord with their will, and they are extremely antagonistic toward you regarding those things. When the Above's words do not accord with their will, they go ahead and change them, and only pass them down once they meet with their agreement. Without their agreement, they do not permit them to be passed down. While in other areas, the Above's work arrangements are passed down as they are, these people pass their altered versions of the work arrangements onto the churches under their charge. Such people always wish to put God off to the side; they are eager to get everyone to believe in them, and follow them, and obey them. In their minds, there are some areas in which God does not measure up to them—they ought to be God themselves, and others ought to believe in them. That is the nature of it. ... They are purely the lackeys of Satan, and when they work, it is the devil that reigns. They damage God's management plan and disturb God's work. They are bona fide antichrists!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three).

God's words cut to the quick and exposed how I didn't carry out work arrangements and acted based on my own will. Work arrangements clearly dictated that leaders and workers should promptly cleanse anyone that had been exposed as an evildoer, nonbeliever or antichrist. As a leader, I should submit and comply unconditionally, and promptly and resolutely carry out the cleansing of all antichrists, evildoers and nonbelievers in the church to ensure that my brothers and sisters were not deceived or disrupted and could enjoy a quiet environment in which to eat and drink God's words, pursue the truth and fulfill their duty. But even though I clearly knew that Fang Ling was a nonbeliever, I was afraid I would offend her by preparing

the materials for her cleansing and would be labeled as ungrateful because she had helped me previously, so I didn't carry out the work arrangements and pompously defended and protected her on the basis that she could spread the gospel, going against work arrangements. I reflected on myself: "I clearly knew that Fang Ling had been exposed as a nonbeliever, so why was it that I still defended her out of my affection for her, and tried to absolve her of all guilt?" I realized it was because this traditional idea of repaying kindness controlled and fettered me. In order to maintain my image, and not be seen as an ungrateful, thankless wretch, I completely ignored the church's interests, not bothering to consider what the consequence of leaving Fang Ling in the church would be, and flagrantly violating work arrangements. Not only did I not prepare the materials to apply for Fang Ling's cleansing, I even assigned her to spread the gospel. The humanity she lived out was so poor that two potential gospel recipients didn't want to continue investigating. This was all the result of my protecting her. I was violating work arrangements and going my own way, obstructing the church's cleansing work. I used my authority to defend and protect a nonbeliever who was doing evil in the church, providing the conditions for an evildoer to do evil and acting as Satan's lackey. I was the very definition of a false leader. I was scared when I realized the evil I had perpetrated, and very regretful. I hurriedly asked everyone to give me their evaluations of Fang Ling. Reading through the evaluations, I realized that she had not only had a negative effect on the gospel work, but had also sown discord and made mischief in the church, spreading negativity, taking unfair advantage of people, and trying to take other people's things as her own even though she was lacking for nothing herself. Reading through all those evaluations, I felt so incredibly guilty and knew that my protecting Fang Ling was doing evil. I knew I had to stop acting based on my affection

and got to work preparing all the materials for Fang Ling's cleansing. Later on, when I had to get signatures from brothers and sisters, I began to worry again: I would have to get many of my relatives to sign, and given that we had just cleansed Liu Hui and now were moving right on to cleanse Fang Ling, would they say I was being ungrateful and ignore me?

I prayed to God, seeking with regard to my situation, and later came across this passage of God's words: **"In everything you do, you must examine whether your intentions are correct. If you are able to act according to the requirements of God, then your relationship with God is normal. This is the minimum standard. Look into your intentions, and if you find that incorrect intentions have arisen, be able to turn your back on them and act according to the words of God; thus will you become someone who is right before God, which in turn demonstrates that your relationship with God is normal, and that all that you do is for God's sake, not your own. In all you do and all you say, be able to set your heart right and be righteous in your actions, and do not be led by your emotions, nor act according to your own will. These are principles by which believers in God must conduct themselves. ... That is to say, if human beings are able to keep God in their hearts and do not pursue personal gain or give thought to their own prospects (in a fleshly sense), but instead bear the burden of life entry, do their best to pursue the truth, and submit to God's work—if you can do this, then the goals you pursue will be correct, and your relationship with God will become normal. Making right one's relationship with God can be called the first step of entry into one's spiritual journey. Although man's fate is in God's hands and is predestined by God, and cannot be changed by man, whether you can be made perfect by God or be gained by Him depends on whether your**

relationship with God is normal. There may be parts of you that are weak or disobedient—but as long as your views and your intentions are correct, and as long as your relationship with God is right and normal, then you are qualified to be made perfect by God. If you do not have the right relationship with God, and act for the sake of the flesh or your family, then regardless of how hard you work, it will be for nothing. If your relationship with God is normal, then everything else will fall into place. God looks at nothing else, but only at whether your views in your belief in God are correct: whom you believe in, for whose sake you believe, and why you believe. If you are able to see these things clearly and practice with your views well disposed, then you will make progress in your life, and you will also be guaranteed entry onto the right track. If your relationship with God is not normal, and the views of your belief in God are deviant, then all else is in vain, and no matter how hard you believe, you will receive nothing” (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. How Is Your Relationship With God?). Through reading God’s words I realized that in order to have a normal relationship with other people, I first needed to establish a normal relationship with God. I should always act according to God’s words and bring my actions before Him. If people act by their corrupt dispositions, maintaining their relationships with others for the sake of their reputation, status and fleshly interests, God doesn’t commend this, and no matter how they try to maintain relationships it will all be in vain. Ever since Fang Ling had been outed as a nonbeliever, I had been constrained by my corrupt disposition, fearing that she’d think me ungrateful if she were cleansed, and that my family would think I was thankless and would isolate and abandon me. So, to maintain my image in their eyes, I avoided handling things according to principles. I realized that no matter how good I looked to other people, and how much they held me

up, it was useless, because God did not commend it. I was sacrificing the church's interests to maintain relationships; this offended God's disposition. I was a believer, so I should act according to God's words and accept His scrutiny in all things. I had to stop violating work arrangements to maintain relationships, stop being resistant to God, and no matter what kind of attitude they had toward me, even if they abandoned me and ignored me, I had to practice the truth and expose Fang Ling. Fang Ling was a nonbeliever, and often disrupted church life. It was her fault that she was being cleansed, and no one else could be blamed. My brother, his wife and my sisters were believers, I just had to focus on fellowshiping the truth with them and handling affairs according to principles. Later on, when I read a description of Fang Ling's behavior to them, they didn't blame me, and even said that it was right for her to be cleansed, that leaving her in the church was a humiliation of God's name. My brother and his wife even shared some of Fang Ling's unbelieving behaviors with me. I thanked God that things turned out this way, and also got a sense of how joyful and peaceful it was to practice the truth.

Not soon after, I received the notice for Fang Ling's cleansing. But when I thought about reading the notice to her, I began to feel hesitant again. I had prepared the materials myself; surely Fang Ling would hate me! How would we continue interacting after that? She was already upset enough about being cleansed; wouldn't it be adding insult to injury to read her the notice? I thought maybe I could just not read it to her, just tell her some of her lesser evil deeds, and let her know that she had been cleansed. That would make it less awkward for both of us when we saw each other going forward. When I met up with Fang Ling, I saw that she had lost a lot of weight due to the emotional upset of being cleansed. She seemed in really low spirits. I felt awful and almost couldn't bear to go on, but I just

forced myself to read the notice. I even worried about reading the whole thing to her and whether she'd accept it. So, I skipped over the parts that exposed and condemned her. Afterward, whenever I saw her, I always felt a bit awkward, as if I'd done her wrong. I didn't know what was wrong with me. I knew full well that Fang Ling didn't pursue the truth and caused all kinds of trouble, that it was her own fault she'd been cleansed, so why did I find myself in this state? Later on, I came across two passages of God's words: **"The idea that a kindness received should be gratefully repaid is one of the classic criteria in Chinese traditional culture for judging whether a person's conduct is moral or immoral. When evaluating whether someone's humanity is good or bad, and how moral their conduct is, one of the benchmarks is whether they return the favors or help that they receive—whether or not they are someone who gratefully repays the kindness they receive. Within Chinese traditional culture, and within the traditional culture of mankind, people treat this as an important measure of moral conduct. If someone does not understand that a kindness received should be gratefully repaid, and they are ungrateful, then they are considered to be devoid of conscience and unworthy of associating with, and should be despised, spurned or rejected by all. On the other hand, if someone does understand that a kindness received should be gratefully repaid—if they are grateful and return the favors and help they receive with every means at their disposal—they are deemed a person of conscience and humanity. If somebody receives benefits or help from another person, but does not repay them, or just expresses a little gratitude to them with a simple 'thank you' and nothing more, what will the other person think? Might they feel uneasy about it? Might they think, 'That guy doesn't deserve to be helped, he's not a good person. If that's how he responds when**

I've helped him so much, then he has no conscience or humanity, and isn't worth associating with'? If they ran into this kind of person again, would they still help them? They wouldn't wish to, at least" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (7)). **"From ancient times up until the present day, countless people have been influenced by this idea, view, and criterion of moral conduct regarding the repayment of kindness. Even when the person who bestows kindness on them is an evil or bad person and compels them to do nefarious acts and bad deeds, they still go against their own conscience and reason, blindly complying in order to repay their kindness, with many disastrous consequences. It could be said that many people, having been influenced, fettered, constrained, and bound by this criterion of moral conduct, blindly and mistakenly uphold this view of repaying kindness, and are even likely to aid and abet evil people. Now that you have heard My fellowship, you have a clear picture of this situation and can determine that this is foolish loyalty, and that this behavior counts as comporting oneself without setting any limits, and recklessly repaying kindness without any discernment, and that it lacks meaning and value. Because people fear being castigated by public opinion or condemned by others, they reluctantly devote their lives to repaying the kindness of others, even sacrificing their lives in the process, which is an absurd and foolish way to go about things. This saying from traditional culture has not only fettered people's thinking, but it has also placed an unnecessary weight and inconvenience upon their life and saddled their families with additional suffering and burdens. Many people have paid great prices in order to repay kindness received—they view repaying kindness as a social responsibility or their own duty and may even spend their whole lives repaying the kindness of others. They**

believe this to be a perfectly natural and justified thing to do, an unshirkable duty. Is this viewpoint and way of doing things not foolish and absurd? It completely reveals how ignorant and unenlightened people are. In any event, this saying about moral conduct—a kindness received should be gratefully repaid—may be in keeping with people’s notions, but it does not accord with the truth principles. It is incompatible with God’s words and is an incorrect view and way of doing things” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (7)). God’s words were a flawless revelation. Ever since ancient times, a classic measure of people’s humanity has always been whether or not they gratefully repaid kindness received. If someone helped you or was kind to you, you must repay their kindness. If you do so, you’re a good person; if not, you will be abandoned and people will castigate you as a thankless, ungrateful person. Brainwashed and influenced by this idea of gratefully repaying kindness received, people unknowingly live their lives fettered and bound. If someone has helped you in the past, you must repay them, and you need not discern what kind of person they are or what path they walk, and whether it accords with the truth to repay them. Due to this need to repay kindness, some people live their entire lives constrained by others, and there are even some people, who do bad things for other people and are used by them to repay kindness, living lives of misery and suffering. From a young age, my mother taught me to gratefully repay kindness received, that we should never forget the kindness extended to us by others, which may lead to people badmouthing us privately. Most people in my life also used this criterion of conduct to evaluate others’ behavior. I also lived by these aphorisms passed from generation to generation, like “A kindness received should be gratefully repaid,” “Return what you are given tenfold,” and “The kindness of a drop of water should be repaid with a gushing spring.” If

someone helped me, I would always remember and look for a chance to repay them. If I failed to repay someone who had been kind to me, I'd feel guilty, ill at ease, and ashamed to face them. I'd worry that people would say I was an ungrateful person. Because Fang Ling had helped me in the past, even though I had discerned she was a nonbeliever, I worried I'd be castigated if I cleansed her from the church according to principles, so I tried to protect and defend her, to repay her kindness. When I had to read out the description of the evil Fang Ling had done to my brother and sisters, I worried they would say I was ungrateful and so I was scared to confront them. When I had to read the cleansing notice to Fang Ling, and saw how thin and pallid she looked, I couldn't help but feel guilty and opted to just read a description of her evil deeds. After Fang Ling was cleansed, I didn't dare come face to face with her. I knew full well that she didn't pursue the truth and walk the right path and had been cast out, but I always felt I had done her wrong. The help she had given me was like a ball and chain locked to my body, weighing me down to the point of asphyxia. I saw how due to being fettered by this traditional idea, I couldn't even discern right from wrong, much less could I practice the truth. In order to maintain my reputation, and not be accused of being ungrateful by others, I wantonly repaid kindness without distinguishing good from evil. I didn't conduct myself with the slightest bit of principle or baseline, and rebelled against and resisted God. I realized that no matter how people may defend, praise and give the thumbs up to my behavior, I was sacrificing the church's interests, which had left an indelible stain on my tenure as a believer. The consequences of this were quite serious! Through this experience I came to see that traditional culture is a tool by which Satan deceives and corrupts people. Bound up in this flawed idea, I couldn't practice the truth even

though I clearly understood it, rebelling against and resisting God. I no longer wanted to live by satanic philosophies.

Later, I came across another two passages of God's words: **"The traditional cultural concept that 'A kindness received should be gratefully repaid' needs to be discerned. The most important part is the word 'kindness'—how should you view this kindness? What aspect and nature of kindness is it referring to? What is the significance of 'A kindness received should be gratefully repaid'? People must figure out the answers to these questions and under no circumstances be constrained by this idea of repaying kindness—for anyone who pursues the truth, this is absolutely essential. What is 'kindness' according to human notions? On a smaller level, kindness is someone helping you out when you are in trouble. For example, somebody giving you a bowl of rice when you are starving, or a bottle of water when you're dying of thirst, or helping you up when you fall down and can't get up. These are all acts of kindness. A great act of kindness is someone rescuing you when you're in desperate straits—that is a life-saving kindness. When you are in mortal danger and someone helps you to avoid death, they are essentially saving your life. These are some of the things that people perceive as 'kindness.' This sort of kindness far surpasses any petty, material favor—it is a great kindness that cannot be measured in terms of money or material things. Those who receive it feel a kind of gratitude that is impossible to express with just a few words of thanks. Is it accurate, though, for people to measure kindness in this way? (It is not.) Why do you say that it is not accurate? (Because this measurement is based on the standards of traditional culture.) This is an answer based in theory and doctrine, and while it may seem right, it does not get to the essence of the matter"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to

Pursue the Truth (7)). **“Let us now turn our attention to the matter of man’s so-called kindness. For instance, take the case of a kind person who rescues a beggar that collapsed from hunger in the snow outside. They take the beggar into their home, feed and clothe him, and allow him to live among their family and do work for them. Regardless of whether the beggar volunteered to work of his own free will, or whether he did so to repay a debt of kindness, was his rescue an act of kindness? (No.) Even small animals are able to help and rescue each other. It requires just a slight effort for men to perform such deeds, and anyone with humanity is able to do such things and rise to them. One could say that such deeds are a societal responsibility and obligation that anyone with humanity ought to fulfill. Isn’t man’s characterization of them as kindness going a little overboard? Is it an apt characterization? For instance, during a time of famine when many people may go hungry, if a rich person dispenses bags of rice to poor households to help them get through this difficult time, is this not just an example of the kind of basic moral help and support that should occur among men? He just gave them a little bit of rice—it is not as if he gave away all his food to others and went hungry himself. Does this really count as kindness? (No.) The societal responsibilities and obligations that man is capable of fulfilling, those deeds that man should be instinctively capable of doing and ought to do, and simple acts of service that are helpful and beneficial to others—these things can in no way be considered kindness, as they are all cases where man is simply lending a helping hand. Giving help to someone who happens to need it, at an appropriate time and place, is a very normal phenomenon. It is also the responsibility of every member of the human race. This is simply a sort of responsibility and obligation. God gave people these instincts when**

He created them. What instincts am I referring to here? I am referring to man's conscience and reason" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (7)). Through reading God's words, I gained a new understanding of the "kindness" in "repaying kindness received" that had always fettered me. When someone falls upon hard times, lending them a helping hand to get them through it and supporting them to the best of your abilities is a societal responsibility that everyone should take on, and it's not really kindness. Like, when Fang Ling helped take care of my paralyzed husband and looked after my crops in our fields at my most difficult time, this was just normal human relations and reciprocal support between people. Not to mention she's my husband's sister; so, of course she would help to the best of her abilities when her brother came upon hard times. This couldn't really count as kindness. When my husband passed away and I descended into negativity, Fang Ling fellowshipped with me and supported me, but that's just what fellow sisters do for each other, it couldn't be called kindness. If Fang Ling's family was having a hard time, I would support them as well. If she became negative and weak, I would read God's words for her and support her. This is what people with normal humanity should do. And yet, I saw everything that Fang Ling did as kindness, and was always thinking of how I could repay her, as if I never would have made it without her help. In reality, it was the guidance and help of God's words that got me to where I am. After my husband passed away, because I didn't understand the truth, I didn't know how I should proceed, and at my weakest and most negative time, it was God who orchestrated all manner of things, people and places to help me. It was God's words that enlightened and guided me out of my hardship, and got me to where I am now. I lack for nothing now and live just as normally as anyone else, eating and drinking God's words, and fulfilling my duty; this is all due to God's love. If I truly

had a conscience, I should be repaying God. Instead, I lived by this mistaken idea of gratefully repaying kindness received, always valuing my relationships and loving care with others, and never forgetting even the slightest favor someone had done for me, all while resisting and rebelling against God who had given me everything, and not hesitating to violate principles and damage the church's interests to repay kindness. This was actual ungratefulness and lack of humanity. When I realized this, I felt much more at ease, and thought how pitiful I was for not understanding the truth.

Later on, I saw this passage of God's words: **"Someone helped you in the past, was kind to you in certain ways and had an impact on your life or some major event, but their humanity and the path they walk are not in line with your own path and what you seek. You do not speak a common language, you do not like this person and, perhaps, on some level you could say that your interests and what you seek are completely different. Your paths in life, your worldviews, and your outlooks on life are all different—you are two completely different kinds of people. So, how should you approach and respond to the help that they previously gave you? Is this a realistic situation that may arise? (Yes.) So, what should you do? This is also an easy situation to deal with. Given that the two of you are walking different paths, after providing them with whatever material reimbursement you can afford given your means, you find that your beliefs are just too divergent, you cannot walk on the same path, cannot even be friends and can no longer interact. How should you proceed, given that you can no longer interact? Keep your distance from them. They might have been kind to you in the past, but they swindle and cheat their way through society, perpetrating all kinds of nefarious deeds and you do not like this**

person, so it is entirely reasonable to keep your distance from them. Some may say, ‘Isn’t that lacking in conscience to act in that way?’ This is not lacking in conscience—if they were really to encounter some difficulty in their life, you could still help them out, but you cannot be constrained by them or go along with them in doing evil and unconscionable deeds. There is also no need to slave away for them just because they helped you or did a big favor for you in the past—that is not your obligation and they are not worthy of that kind of treatment. You are entitled to choose to interact with, spend time with, and even become friends with people whom you like and get along with, people who are correct. You can fulfill your responsibility and obligation to this person, this is your right. Of course, you can also refuse to become friends with and have dealings with people that you do not like, and you need not fulfill any obligation or responsibility to them—this is also your right. Even if you decide to abandon this person and refuse to interact with them or fulfill any responsibility or obligation to them, this would not be wrong. You must set certain limits on the way you comport yourself, and treat different people in different ways. You should not associate with evil people or follow their bad example, this is the wise choice. Do not be influenced by various factors such as gratitude, emotions, and public opinion—this is taking a stance and having principles, and is what you ought to do” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (7)). God’s words clearly stated the principles for handling people. If someone has done us a big favor in the past, we must treat them based upon the quality of their humanity and the path they walk. If they are a good person and walk the right path, we can converse with them normally, and help them as best we can when they need help. If the person that helped us doesn’t walk the right path and commits

outrages, we must be careful about interacting with them and discern the nature of what they say and do. If necessary, we may have to abandon them or distance ourselves from them, and just give them some material aid to the best of our ability. If they believe in God but do not pursue the truth, go through the motions in their duties, cause trouble, and disrupt the work of God's house, we must prune and deal with them according to the truth principles. If they still do not repent, then we must hold fast to principles, warning those that need warning and cleansing those that ought to be cleansed according to principles. We mustn't act according to satanic laws, associating with evil and violating principles. I thought of how I hadn't treated people according to principles, had repeatedly acted ignorantly, been fettered by traditional thoughts, and unwittingly had become Satan's lackey, causing disruption to church life. If we don't live by the truth in our faith, we can resist God and offend His disposition at any time! Fang Ling still gives me some material support from time to time, but through God's words, I've learned how to conceive of this support. I do not look at this support as her treating me well or offering me kindness, but rather as a sign of God's love. God moved her to help me, so I ought to thank God and fulfill my duty to repay Him.

In the past, I always thought that I had to repay kindness received and be grateful, thinking that is what good people do. Through my own experience, however, I found that Satan uses this traditional idea of repaying kindness to fetter people, confine their thinking, and make them mix up right and wrong, act without principles, and unwittingly become tools of Satan. I also learned that no matter how good people might think satanic things are, those things are not the truth. Only God's words are the truth. God's words allow us to discern right from wrong and live out normal humanity. Only when we live by the truth and treat people and things

according to the principles of God's words, can we act according to God's will and live with character and dignity. All gratitude to God for His salvation!

64. What I Gained by Being an Honest Person

By Felix, South Korea

At a meeting, a leader asked me how a church's watering of newcomers that I was in charge of was going. I was stunned. I hadn't followed up on it for the past few days and I didn't know the specifics. How should I respond? If I said I didn't know, the leader and other co-workers would definitely say I wasn't doing practical work, and that would be embarrassing. I figured I could just share what I knew from before and then see what I could do after that. So I responded, "Arrangements have been made for all of that work, and we've added some team members." The leader said right away, "You're not answering the question, you're prevaricating. That's being cunning. If you don't know, just say so and follow up as soon as you can. Why are you being so indirect? That's not good. A mistake is a mistake, and you should have the courage to admit to it!" I felt fidgety and uneasy, and my face was burning. Just what I'd feared had happened. I felt like I'd totally lost face, that everyone had seen through me. I knew that what the leader said was right, but I couldn't submit in my heart. I felt like she didn't have to say so much about it. Wouldn't it be fine if I just took care of it as soon as I could? Why on earth did she have to prune and deal with me in front of all those people? I was really upset, so I silently prayed, "God, I feel resistant to what happened today and I can't submit to it. Please enlighten me so I can know myself and learn a lesson."

I read God's words later: **"Let us first look at what kind of question Jehovah God asked of Satan. 'From where come you?' Isn't this a straightforward question? Is there any hidden meaning? No; it is just a straightforward question. If I were to ask you: 'Where do you come from?' how then would you answer? Is it a difficult question to**

answer? Would you say: ‘From going to and fro, and from walking up and down’? (No.) You would not answer like this. So, how then do you feel when you see Satan answering in this way? (We feel that Satan is being absurd, but also deceitful.) Can you tell what I am feeling? Every time I see these words of Satan, I feel disgusted, because Satan talks, and yet its words contain no substance. Did Satan answer God’s question? No, the words Satan spoke were not an answer, they did not yield anything. They were not an answer to God’s question. ‘From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.’ What is your understanding of these words? Just where does Satan come from? Have you received an answer to this question? (No.) This is the ‘genius’ of Satan’s cunning schemes—not letting anyone discover what it is actually saying. Having heard these words you still cannot discern what it has said, even though it has finished answering. Yet Satan believes it has answered perfectly. How then do you feel? Disgusted? (Yes.) Now you begin to feel disgust in response to these words. Satan’s words have a certain characteristic: What Satan says leaves you scratching your head, unable to perceive the source of its words. Sometimes Satan has motives and speaks deliberately, and sometimes governed by its nature, such words emerge spontaneously, and come straight out of Satan’s mouth. Satan does not spend a long time weighing such words; rather, they are expressed without thinking. When God asked where it came from, Satan answered with a few ambiguous words. You feel very puzzled, never knowing exactly where Satan is from. Are there any among you who speak like this? What kind of way is this to speak? (It is ambiguous and does not give a certain answer.) What kind of words should we use to describe this way of speaking? It is diversionary and misleading. Suppose someone does not

want to let others know what they did yesterday. You ask them: ‘I saw you yesterday. Where were you going?’ They do not tell you directly where they went. Rather, they say: ‘What a day it was yesterday. It was so tiring!’ Did they answer your question? They did, but they did not give the answer you wanted. This is the ‘genius’ within the artifice of man’s speech. You can never discover what they mean, nor perceive the source or intention of their words. You do not know what they are trying to avoid because in their heart they have their own story—this is **insidious**” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique IV). I saw from what God’s words reveal that Satan’s words and deeds all carry motives and trickery. To cover up its shameful intentions, it speaks in really roundabout ways so people can’t make sense of it. It’s really insidious and cunning. Satan answers God’s questions with ambiguous, misleading responses. It’s disgusting to God. As for me, I clearly didn’t know how the watering of newcomers was going, but I wasn’t truthful. I gave a non-answer to confuse the leader. I answered the question without letting the leader see the truth. To protect my face and status, and so the leader wouldn’t know I wasn’t doing practical work and the brothers and sisters there wouldn’t look down on me, I brazenly said something to obscure the facts, to mislead and deceive them. I was displaying a satanic disposition! Thinking back on it, I was usually that way with the brothers and sisters. Like sometimes, some people asked me some skills-based questions, but I didn’t really have a good understanding of these things, and I was afraid that telling the truth would make them look down on me, so I said things like, “If this problem isn’t resolved, it’s not just an issue with your skill level, right? Isn’t it because you have been muddling through your duty? Or are you failing to learn and communicate?” On the surface, it looked like I was answering the question, but I knew in my heart that kind of answer didn’t resolve the

issue. I thought when I asked questions like that in return, they would self-reflect, and that they would also stop asking me questions. That way, my shortcomings wouldn't be exposed. I was always being cunning and deceptive to protect my reputation and status. I was happier to tell lies than to lose face. That fully revealed my slippery, crafty nature that was fed up with the truth. I thought that lying and deceiving is really clever, but in fact, it's foolish! Even if I duped and misled everyone, and they looked up to me and thought I could get work done and do my duty well, God wouldn't approve—He'd be disgusted with me. Then what good was the approval of these people? At that moment, I felt empty-handed and pathetic. I was busy from morning till night, but I couldn't say a single honest thing. My cunning disposition hadn't changed at all, and I didn't have any truth reality. Being so harshly exposed, pruned and dealt with by the leader that day was a warning for me! I knew I couldn't continue on that way, but I had to repent to God, seek to be an honest person, and live out that reality.

After that, I wondered what other dishonest behaviors I still had. I knew I had to do some introspection and change them. I realized through self-reflection that there were some cunning parts in my recent work summary, too. I noted in detail the work that was done more thoroughly, more completely. But the work that was done roughly and inefficiently I wrote about in general terms, or didn't write about how it was developing at all. I remember there was a project that wasn't getting good results, and when it came time to do the work summary, I was starting to consider what everyone would think of me if I wrote the truth. Would they say I couldn't even do that little project well, that I was incompetent? I weighed the pros and cons, and decided not to write about that project's progress so no one would know, and maybe they'd think I was just too busy and had forgotten about it. I was plotting, being disingenuous and deceitful time after time. I

was so crafty! Over my years of faith, though I'd done lots of duties and could endure hardship and pay a price, I wasn't putting effort into practicing the truth. I was just thinking about how to protect my reputation and status, so I still wasn't remotely speaking and acting like an honest person. I didn't have the courage to be simple and open—it was pathetic! Sometimes I'd ask myself: God has spoken to us so much, and I've read quite a bit of His words, but am I living out the reality of any of it? I couldn't even write an accurate work summary. What would I gain that way in the end? I felt like I was on the brink of danger. Without repenting and pursuing a change in disposition, I'd be cast out by God at any point. I said a prayer in my heart, "God, I'm so deeply corrupted. I'm constantly lying and deceiving to protect my face and status. Please enlighten me to truly know myself."

I read more of God's words after that, they say: **"If you are a leader or worker, are you afraid of the house of God making inquiries about and supervising your work? Are you afraid that the house of God will discover lapses and mistakes in your work and deal with you? Are you afraid that after the Above gets to know your real caliber and stature, they will see you in a different light and not consider you for promotion? If you have these fears, this proves that your motivations are not for the sake of church work, you are working for the sake of status and prestige, which proves that you have the disposition of an antichrist. If you have the disposition of an antichrist, you are liable to walk the path of the antichrists, and commit all the evil wrought by antichrists. If, in your heart, you have no fear of God's house supervising your work, and you are able to provide real answers to the questions and inquiries of the Above, without hiding anything, and say as much as you know, then regardless of whether what you say is right**

or wrong, irrespective of the corruption you revealed—even if you revealed the disposition of an antichrist—you will absolutely not be defined as an antichrist. What's key is whether you are able to know your own disposition of an antichrist, and whether you are able to seek the truth in order to solve this problem. If you are someone who accepts the truth, your antichrist's disposition can be fixed. If you know full well that you have the disposition of an antichrist and yet do not seek the truth to resolve it, if you even try to conceal or lie about problems that occur and shift responsibility, and if you do not accept the truth when subjected to pruning and dealing, then this is a serious problem, and you are no different from an antichrist. Knowing that you have the disposition of an antichrist, why do you not dare face it? Why can you not approach it frankly and say, 'If the Above inquires about my work, I'll say all I know, and even if the bad things I've done come to light, and the Above no longer makes use of me once they know, and I lose my status, I'll still say clearly what I have to say'? Your fear of supervision of and inquiries after your work by God's house proves that you treasure your status more than the truth. Is this not the disposition of an antichrist? To cherish status above all is the disposition of an antichrist. Why do you treasure status so much? What are the benefits of status? If status brought you disaster, difficulties, embarrassment, and pain, would you still treasure it? (No.) There are so many benefits to having status, things like envy, respect, high opinion, and flattery from other people, as well as their admiration and reverence. There is also the sense of superiority and privilege that gives you pride and a sense of self-worth. In addition, you can also enjoy things that others do not, such as trappings of status and special treatment. These are the things you dare not even think of, and are

what you have longed for in your dreams. Do you treasure these things? If status is merely hollow, with no real significance, and defending it serves no real purpose, is it not foolish to treasure it? If you can let go of things such as interests and enjoyments of the flesh, then prestige, profit, and status will no longer tie you down. So, what has to be resolved before resolving issues related to treasuring and chasing status? First, see through to the nature of the problem of doing evil and engaging in trickery, concealment, and covering up, as well as declining the supervision, inquiries, and investigation of God's house, in order to enjoy the trappings of status. Isn't this blatant resistance and opposition against God? If you can see through to the nature and consequences of coveting the trappings of status, the problem of pursuing status will be resolved. And without the ability to see through to the essence of coveting the trappings of status, this problem will **never be resolved**" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part Two)). They helped me realize that I couldn't stop myself from lying and deceiving because I cherished my reputation and status too much. To protect my name and position, and so the leader wouldn't see the reality of my failures to follow up on work, I tried to scheme, play tricks, mislead the leader with my words. In my work summary I covered up my shortcomings, only writing the good, not the bad, so others would think I was a leader who did practical work. I was afraid they would see my true face and no longer look up to me, and then I'd not get to enjoy the sense of superiority brought by that status. When I saw in God's words: **"To cherish status above all is the disposition of an antichrist,"** I finally realized what a serious issue this was. I thought of those antichrists who are expelled. They always pursue name and status in their duty, and they play tricks and are deceitful behind the scenes. That

seriously disrupts the work of the church, so they're exposed and kicked out. There are also false leaders who enjoy the benefits of status. They're always crafty in their duty and cover up the truth when they don't do real work, which holds up the work of the church. I remember a sister who was in charge of gospel work. She was handling other work at the time, too, but she was slippery and deceitful in both positions. In gospel work, she said she was busy with her other work, and in her other work she claimed she was busy with gospel work. Actually she wasn't doing her work on either side, and she ended up being exposed and cast out. The lessons from others' failures were a warning for me. Playing games and being deceitful for the sake of my name and status was just tricking myself and others, being foolish. God sees everything and He likes honest people. Only honest people have a firm footing in God's house, and cunning people will be exposed and cast out sooner or later. In my faith I wasn't seeking to be an honest person, but I was putting on an act, leaving a false impression, and though I fooled some people, I couldn't escape God's scrutiny. In the end God would have exposed me and cast me out. Then, I realized the importance of being honest and knew that being honest as God requires and accepting His scrutiny in all things is the only way to gain His approval. As the word of God says: **"If someone always says what's truly in their heart, if they speak honestly, if they speak plainly, if they are sincere, and not at all careless or perfunctory while performing their duty, and if they can practice the truth they understand, then this person has a hope of gaining the truth. If a person always covers themselves up and conceals their heart so that no one can see them clearly, if they give a false impression to deceive others, then they are in grave danger, they are in great trouble, it will be very difficult for them to gain the truth. You can see from someone's daily life and their words and actions what**

their prospects are. If this person is always pretending, always putting on airs, then this person is not someone who accepts the truth, and they will be revealed and cast out sooner or later. ... People who never open their hearts, who always try to hide and conceal things, who pretend that they are respectable, who want people to think highly of them, who don't allow others to get a full measure of them, who want people to admire them—are these people not foolish? These people are the most foolish! That's because the truth about people will reveal itself sooner or later. What path do they walk with this kind of comportment? This is the path of the Pharisees. Are hypocrites in danger or not? These are the people God despises the most, so do you think they are in danger or not? All those who are Pharisees walk the road to destruction!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One's Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). Always hiding and concealing, always pretending is the wrong path, and if you don't turn back, you'll ultimately be destroyed. I prayed to God and set my resolve, ready to start pursuing a change in disposition and be an honest person.

I thought of how God's word says: **"All that you do, every action, every intention, and every reaction should be brought before God. Even your daily spiritual life—your prayers, your closeness to God, how you eat and drink of God's words, your fellowship with your brothers and sisters, and your life within the church—and your service in partnership can be brought before God for His scrutiny. It is such practice that will help you achieve growth in life. The process of accepting God's scrutiny is the process of purification. The more you can accept God's scrutiny, the more you are purified and the more you are in accord with God's will, so that you will not be drawn into debauchery, and your heart will live in His presence. The more you**

accept His scrutiny, the greater are Satan's humiliation and your ability to forsake the flesh. So, the acceptance of God's scrutiny is a path of practice people should follow" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Perfects Those Who Are After His Own Heart). By pondering God's words I gained a path of practice: accepting God's scrutiny. So long as we accept God's scrutiny our slippery and deceitful motives and ideas can be easily rectified, and only thus can our hearts become more and more pure and honest, and only thus will we be able to easily practice the truth and perform our duties well. After understanding God's will, I practiced opening my heart to God, not pretending or packaging myself, and accepting God's scrutiny in all things. I'd warn myself when I wrote a work summary after that to be honest and accept God's scrutiny, and accurately describe the work I hadn't done well. When the leader asked about my work, I'd consciously practice telling the truth. When the others asked me questions, I was truthful about what I didn't know. If I knew, I said I knew, and if I didn't, then I said I didn't. After putting this into practice I felt much more at ease. I experienced that consciously accepting God's scrutiny is a path to enter into the truth reality and cast off corruption. Without being pruned or dealt with, I wouldn't have seriously examined my own corrupt disposition, and really wouldn't have pursued the truth to enter into reality. And no matter how many years I had faith, how many duties I did or how much I suffered, my corrupt disposition would never have changed at all. I wouldn't have been able to be saved even if I hold onto my belief to the end, and I'd be destined to be cast out by God.

Being pruned and dealt with that time showed me the importance of being honest, and I gained some understanding of my slippery and cunning satanic disposition. That was God's love and salvation.

65. A Craving for Comfort Almost Doomed Me

By Noelle, South Korea

I was responsible for video work in 2019 while also serving as a church leader. I swore I'd do my duty well. After that, I really put my heart into my duty and learned how to do the church's work from the sister I was partnered with. I did my best to attend every gathering, large and small, and when the brothers' and sisters' states were bad, I would search within God's word to fellowship with them and resolve their issues. On top of this, I reviewed videos my brothers and sisters had completed every day. Every single day was really packed for me. After a while I got tired, and gradually lost the resolve I'd had at first. I felt more and more resistant to leading such a hectic life. Especially when I was reviewing videos, I really had to deliberate and think hard, and then offer proper suggestions to address any problems I found. I found this too tiring and too mentally taxing. When I thought like this, I started getting sloppy while reviewing videos and for some I'd just respond after a cursory view. Sometimes I just turned a blind eye when there were clearly problems because otherwise I'd have to think of a solution, so I just kept my mouth shut. I got more and more careless in my duty, which meant videos kept getting sent back and forth for revisions. It wasted a lot of people's effort. These were serious consequences, but I didn't self-reflect. I even felt like it wasn't directly related to me, and that it was because there were too many problems in the others' videos.

Once, I ran into a real technical bottleneck with a video in my hands that needed some fresh ideas. My brothers and sisters were coming up with all sorts of ideas that just made my head swim. I thought, "This is too tiring to think about, I'll let them make a plan!" I delegated the task with the excuse that I was in charge of the overall work, so I could justify not

supervising and following up on the video. But since no one had faced these kinds of issues before, and they didn't understand some of the principles very well, they didn't know how to handle such complex work. Because of this, there wasn't any progress, and the video ended up getting shelved. My partner, Leah, saw that we were being ineffective and our progress was slow, so she gave a heads-up and urged us to move faster on the work. I complained that she was being too hard on us, and the other brothers and sisters went along with me, pushing back against her arrangements. This left Leah feeling very constrained and she became very cautious every time she discussed work arrangements with us. This led to delay after delay, which held up our progress. I usually wasn't too concerned with the learning of professional skills, and I just felt like getting training materials together was a real hassle, so I'd always fob it off on Leah. Sometimes I didn't participate in training with the excuse that I was too busy with my duty. In this way, I became lax and sluggish in my duty every day. Once, I didn't even prepare ahead of time for a work discussion, which wasted everyone's time.

Then one day, I fell and twisted my ankle when I missed a step walking down some stairs. I didn't reflect on why that had happened to me, and I just thought I could get some good rest since my ankle was hurt. Leah exposed and dealt with me several times, telling me I didn't have a burden in my duty, that it was delaying the church's work and having a negative impact on the others. After her fellowship I'd be more proactive for a few days, and then just start to slack off again. I didn't think the issue was too serious, and just kept giving myself a pass, thinking, "I'm just being a tiny bit lazy, but I'm not being arrogant, constraining, or oppressing others by being autocratic, so it isn't a big deal. Anyway, I have caliber and some professional skills, so I won't be dismissed." And so, Leah's warnings went

in one ear and out the other, and I didn't take them seriously at all. I continued being slack in my duty and even saw some tasks as a burden, and as baggage. Being so sloppy meant lots of videos had to be sent back to be reworked and it was ages before they were released.

One morning, an upper leader stopped by unexpectedly and said our duty hadn't been producing any results, and that issues that had already been mentioned kept cropping up. She asked us exactly what the problem was. She also asked if we were capable of performing this duty, and said if things continued to go on that way, we'd all be dismissed. Hearing that scared me. I was a church leader and I was also heading up our work, so I was directly responsible for everything being a mess. It was entirely because of my sloppiness. The more I thought about it, the more I realized the seriousness of the problem. The upper leader soon found out about how I'd been doing my duty and dismissed me. She also severely dealt with me, saying, "The church has entrusted you with important work, but you don't care at all when you see so many problems and difficulties. You just care about your own carnal comfort, stalling progress on the videos for months. You are totally devoid of a conscience! The church has been cultivating you, but you don't care at all about God's will, and it is incredibly disappointing. You are a leader but don't fulfill your duty well. You are learning nothing and incapable of progressing, and aren't worth cultivating. You'll be cast out if you don't repent and change." Her words were a really harsh blow to me. My mind went blank, and I kept asking myself: What have I been doing all these months? How did things get to this point? Hearing her say I wasn't worth cultivating really made me feel like I didn't have a future. I was really upset and felt like all the strength had been sapped out of me. I hated myself for not cherishing my duty in the first place, but now it was too late.

After being dismissed, I sunk into a negative state of despair. I felt like everyone had definitely seen through me, and would cast me aside as a bad example, and God would detest me, too. Thinking about what the leader said when dealing with me really cut to the quick. I felt like I had been exposed and cast out. Those were really painful days for me. Then one day, I read a passage of God's words that really touched me. God's words say: **"If you are loyal to God, and perform your duty with sincerity, could you still be negative and weak when dealt with and pruned? So what should be done if you really are negative and weak? (We should pray to God and depend on God, try and think what God asks, reflect on what we lack, what mistakes we have made; in the areas we have fallen down, that is where we should climb back up again.) That's right. Negativity and weakness are not big problems. God does not condemn them. So long as someone can climb back up where they have fallen, and learn their lesson, and perform their duty normally, that's all there is to it. No one will hold it against you, so do not be endlessly negative. If you discard your duty and flee from it, you will have ruined yourself completely. Everyone is negative and weak at times—just search for the truth, and negativity and weakness are easily resolved. Some people's state is completely changed just by reading a chapter of God's words or singing a few hymns; they can open their heart in prayer to God, and they can praise Him. Has their problem not then been resolved? To be dealt with and pruned is, in fact, absolutely a good thing. Even if the words that deal with and prune you are a bit harsh, a bit biting, that is because you acted quite without sense, and you violated principles without even realizing it—how could you not be dealt with in such circumstances? Dealing with you in this way is actually to help you, this is love for you. You should understand this and not complain. So, if**

dealing and pruning give rise to negativity and complaint, it is foolishness and ignorance, the behavior of someone without sense” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Reading God’s words, tears just kept streaming down my face. The leader was right about everything she said when dealing with me, and I was criticized that harshly because everything I’d done had been so exasperating. But I shouldn’t just give up on myself. I had to really reflect on why I’d failed, and change and repent as soon as possible. That was the right approach I should take. So I said a prayer, asking God to guide me in reflection on and knowing myself through this failure.

One day, I read some words of God exposing and dissecting false leaders that helped me understand myself a little. God’s words say: **“False leaders do not do real work, but they know how to be an official. What is the first thing they do once they become a leader? They start trying to win people over. They take the approach of ‘A new manager must make a strong impression’: First they do a few things to curry favor with people, they introduce a few things to make people’s lives easier, they try to make a good impression on people, to show everyone that they are in tune with the masses, so that everyone praises them and says ‘they are like a parent to us!’ Then they officially take over. They feel that now they have popular support and their position is secure, it is right and proper for them to enjoy the trappings of status. Their mottos are, ‘Life is just about eating and dressing,’ ‘Seize the day for pleasure, for life is short,’ and ‘Drink today’s wine today, and worry about tomorrow, tomorrow.’ They enjoy each day as it comes, they have as much fun as they can, and they give no thought to the future, much less do they consider what responsibilities a leader should fulfill and what duties they should perform. They preach a few words and**

doctrines and do a few tasks for appearance's sake as a matter of course, but they do not do any real work. They do not try to discover real problems in the church in order to completely solve them. What is the point in doing such superficial work? Is this not deceitful? Can serious responsibilities be entrusted to this kind of false leader? Are they in line with principles and conditions of God's house for selecting leaders and workers? (No.) These people don't have any conscience or reason, they are devoid of any sense of responsibility, and yet they still wish to serve in an official capacity as a church leader—why are they so shameless? For some people who have a sense of responsibility, if they are of poor caliber, they cannot be leaders—and that's to say nothing of human trash that has no sense of responsibility at all; they are even less qualified to be leaders. Just how lazy are such indolent false leaders? They discover an issue, and they are aware that this is an issue, but they treat it like nothing and pay it no mind. They are so irresponsible! Though they may be good talkers and seem to have a little caliber, they can't solve various problems in the church's work, leading to the work grinding to a standstill, and to problems piling up and up and up. Yet in spite of this, these leaders do not concern themselves with these problems, and insist on carrying out a few frivolous tasks as a matter of course. And what is the end result? Do they not make a mess of church work, do they not screw it up? Do they not cause chaos and fragmentation in the church? This is the inevitable outcome” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (8)). “All false leaders never do practical work, and they act like their leadership role is some official post, thoroughly enjoying the perks of their status. The duty that ought to be performed and work that ought to be done by a leader they treat as an

encumbrance, as a bother. In their hearts, they brim with defiance toward the work of the church: If you have them keep an eye on the work or find out issues that exist within it that need to be followed up on and resolved, they are full of reluctance. This is the work that leaders and workers are supposed to do, this is their job. If you don't do it—if you are unwilling to do it—why do you still want to be a leader or worker? Do you perform your duty in order to be mindful of God's will, or in order to be an official and enjoy the trappings of status? Is it not shameless to be a leader if you just wish to hold some official position? No one is of lower character—these people have no self-respect, they are without shame” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (8)). Reading these words of God, I felt deeply ashamed. Was I not exactly that type of indolent false leader God was talking about? From the beginning, I felt like the person in charge not only has the final say, but also gains others' esteem, so I worked hard and suffered for the sake of this status. I gave everyone a false impression, making them think I could take on a lot of responsibility. Once I got into this position and the others trusted me, I showed my true colors. I started craving the trappings of status, and when I saw the quantity of work and all those difficulties, I didn't want to bother. I felt like it was burdensome, so I thought about how to lighten the load and have fewer worries. I hated how mentally tiring reviewing the videos was, so I just arbitrarily gave unreliable suggestions and had other people make repeated edits, wasting manpower. When problems came up with videos I was in charge of, I didn't rack my brains for a solution, but used my status to play tricks, getting other people to handle them, and I just disregarded and ignored them. That left problems unsolved and no progress being made in our work. I found all sorts of excuses to avoid technical training and hand it

off whenever possible. I also dragged my feet on urgent work planning and was full of complaints, constraining my partner. Our progress was hindered because I wasn't handling a lot of work promptly. Thinking back on everything I'd done, I really wanted to smack myself. When I got some status, I just craved comfort and was constantly treacherous and slippery. I saw my work as child's play and didn't have a shred of responsibility. I didn't resolve problems right away and remained indifferent when I saw the work of the church suffering. How were my actions any different from those of Communist Party officials? They use all sorts of tactics to seize status, and once they have done this, they don't resolve common people's problems. They just want to cheat their way into food and drink, and to use their power for personal gain. It's evil and shameless. I was just like that. The church gave me such important work, but I just cared about carnal comfort and ease, and I didn't do any real work. Right now is the most crucial time to spread the gospel, and the sooner these testimonial videos get online, the more people can seek and investigate the true way. But I didn't consider God's will at all. I neglected my duty, seriously delaying the work of the church. I was selfish and vile, and totally lacking humanity. Then I clearly saw what a lazy, selfish and despicable thing I was. I had cheated my way into a position but didn't do any practical work. I had poor character and wasn't worth trusting. I truly had no sense of morality. Reflecting on all this sent one stab of pain after another to my heart. I prayed, "Oh God, I'm so lacking in humanity. I accepted this duty but didn't properly do my job, which hindered the work of the church. God, my being dismissed was Your righteousness. I want to repent and change—please guide me to know myself."

In my reflection, I remembered how the others had fellowshiped with me many times, pointing out my problems, and even dealing with me and

exposing me, but I hadn't taken it to heart at all. I still felt like being lazy and concerned with carnal comforts wasn't such a big problem, that I wasn't hurting or constraining anyone. On top of that, since I had caliber and knew the job, I figured the church wouldn't dismiss me for being lazy. I didn't realize that these were just my own notions and imaginings until I read God's words. God's words say: **"Who has the more serious problem: lazy people, or people with poor caliber? (Lazy people.) Why do lazy people have a serious problem? (People of poor caliber cannot be leaders or workers, but they can be somewhat effective when they perform a duty that matches their abilities. People who are lazy can't do anything; even if they do have caliber, they do nothing with it.) Lazy people can't do anything. In a word, they are trash, invalidated by idleness. No matter how good the caliber of lazy people is, it is nothing more than window dressing; their good caliber is of no use. This is because they are too lazy, they know what they are supposed to do, but don't do it; even if they know something is a problem, they do not seek the truth to resolve it; they know what hardships they should suffer in order for the work to be effective, but are unwilling to endure such valuable suffering. As a result, they do not gain any truths, and do not do any real work. They do not wish to endure the hardships people are supposed to; they know only the greed for comfort, the enjoyment of times of joy and leisure, and the enjoyment of a free and relaxed life. Are they not useless? People who cannot endure hardship are not fit to live. Whoever is always wishing to live as a parasite is someone without conscience or reason; they are a beast, of a sort unfit even to render service. Because they cannot endure hardship, the service they render is poor, and if they wish to gain the truth, there is even less of a hope of that. A person who cannot suffer and does not love the truth is a wastrel, unqualified**

even to render service. They are a beast, without a shred of humanity. Nothing short of casting such people out accords with God's will" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (8)). **"How you regard God's commissions is extremely important, and this is a very serious matter. If you cannot complete what God has entrusted to people, then you are not fit to live in His presence and you should be punished. It is perfectly natural and justified that humans should complete whatever commissions God entrusts to them. This is man's supreme responsibility, and is just as important as their very lives. If you do not take God's commissions seriously, then you are betraying Him in the most grievous way. In this, you are more lamentable than Judas, and should be cursed"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). After reading God's words I realized that although it didn't look like I'd hurt anyone, I had taken my duty lightly and held up the work of the church. That was a serious betrayal of God, even more detestable than Judas. I was shuddering, thinking back on everything I'd done in my duty. I had ignored others' fellowship and advice so many times, even wrongly thinking that since I knew the job and had caliber, the church wouldn't dismiss me for my laziness. I was so apathetic and intransigent. It was both pitiful and laughable, and I hadn't been able to see how dangerous that was. God has clearly said that He hates people who have caliber, but are lazy and treacherous, that they're despicable and have poor humanity, and aren't worthy of God's trust. People who have lower caliber but are grounded, hardworking, and willing to suffer are better than them. They're genuine in their duty. They put their heart into it and they are conscientious and responsible. But as for me, I appeared to have a bit of caliber, when in fact, I couldn't do even the most basic things a created being should in their duty. What kind of humanity

and caliber is that? At that point I really saw the truth about myself, and understood why the leader said I wasn't worth cultivating, and that I'd be cast out if I didn't repent and change. With that kind of humanity, being both lazy and deceitful, having no responsibility toward my duty, I wasn't worthy of trust and should be dismissed and cast out. I felt really indebted to God when I thought about all the time I'd wasted. I just wanted to pursue the truth well from then on, and to do my duty properly to repay God's love.

Later on, I began to do textual work. There were a lot of things to do and every day was busy, so I kept warning myself to do my duty well and not give in to the flesh again. In the beginning, I was responsible for my duty. I felt like I'd changed somewhat. But as our workload increased and some difficulties and problems cropped up, my nature showed itself again. I was thinking, "Resolving these problems is so mentally tiring, just giving them a quick once-over should be fine, and I'll let other people resolve the more complex issues." A sister often said that I was muddling through, and warned me to take the duty more seriously. I'd say I would, and did better for a few days, but then I'd get anxious when something complicated came up and think it was too much trouble, too tiring to handle, so I'd leave it as was. Day after day went by like that. Two sisters on our team were later transferred because they weren't getting good results and I suddenly had an ominous feeling. I wasn't doing much better in my duty than them, and I noticed all the others were making more progress than I was. I'd become the worst on the team. Though I was still doing my duty, I felt really uneasy and I was worried I'd be transferred next. I talked to a sister about my state, and she said that the reason I wasn't getting good results in my duty wasn't because I didn't have caliber, but that I was too sloppy. I'd been in that duty for a while but I was still making really basic mistakes, so that had to mean there was a problem in my attitude toward it. What she said really stirred up

some feelings within me. I thought I'd already resolved to do my duty well, so why was I still approaching it like this? I came before God in prayer and seeking.

One day, I read a passage of God's words that gave me more clarity on this problem of mine. God's words say: **"No matter what work some people do or what duty they perform, they are incapable of succeeding at it, it is too much for them, they are incapable of fulfilling any of the obligations or responsibilities that people ought to. Are they not trash? Are they still worthy of being called people? With the exception of simpletons, the mentally handicapped, and those who suffer from physical impairments, is there anyone alive who ought not to perform their duties and fulfill their responsibilities? But this kind of person is always conniving and playing dirty, and does not wish to fulfill their responsibilities; the implication is that they do not wish to conduct themselves like a proper person. God gave them caliber and gifts, He gave them the opportunity to be a human being, yet they cannot use these in performing their duty. They do nothing, but wish to enjoy everything. Is such a person fit to be called a human being? No matter what work is given to them—whether it be important or ordinary, difficult or simple—they are always careless and perfunctory, always lazy and slippery. When problems arise, they try to push responsibility for them onto other people; they take no responsibility, wishing to keep living their parasitic lives. Are they not useless trash? In society, who does not have to depend on themselves for survival? Once a person is grown, they must provide for themselves. Their parents have fulfilled their responsibility. Even if their parents were willing to support them, they would be uneasy with it, and ought to be able to recognize, 'My parents have finished their job of raising children. I'm an adult, and**

I'm able-bodied—I should be able to live independently.' Is this not the minimum sense that an adult ought to have? If someone truly has sense, they could not continue mooching off their parents; they would be afraid of others' laughter, of being shamed. So, does an idle loafer have sense? (No.) They always want something for nothing, they never want to take responsibility, they are looking for a free lunch, they want three square meals a day—and for someone to wait on them, and for the food to be delicious—without doing any work. Is this not the mindset of a parasite? And do people who are parasites have conscience and sense? Do they have dignity and integrity? Absolutely not; they are all freeloading good-for-nothings, all beasts without conscience or reason. None of them are fit to remain in God's house"

(The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (8)). I learned from God's words that people with conscience and reason put their all into their duty and fulfill it properly. Whereas those who lack normal humanity and reason aren't ever willing to suffer or be inconvenienced, and they just play tricks and make do, without any thought for their responsibilities or obligations. Even if God gives them caliber and gifts, and a chance to do a duty, since they don't learn anything, and they only want to enjoy carnal comforts, and feel zero responsibility, ultimately they'll be unable to do anything and they'll become useless. I was one of these people God was describing. After my dismissal, the church let me do textual work, which was giving me chance to repent, but I didn't know to cherish this. I didn't want to improve in my duty, and when I encountered real difficulties, I just passed them off to somebody else, absolutely not willing to spend mental energy or time thinking things over. As a result, I wasn't making any progress in my duty. I was really troubled: Why did I retreat from any difficulty, and hide from any hardship?

I read some of God's words in my devotionals once that gave me some understanding of the root of the problem. God's words say: **"Today, you do not believe the words I say, and you pay no attention to them; when the day comes for this work to spread and you see the entirety of it, you will regret, and at that time you will be dumbfounded. There are blessings, yet you do not know to enjoy them, and there is the truth, yet you do not pursue it. Do you not bring contempt upon yourself? Today, although the next step of God's work has yet to begin, there is nothing exceptional about the demands that are made of you and what you are asked to live out. There is so much work, and so many truths; are they not worthy of being known by you? Is God's chastisement and judgment incapable of awakening your spirit? Is God's chastisement and judgment incapable of making you hate yourself? Are you content to live under the influence of Satan, with peace and joy, and a little fleshly comfort? Are you not the lowliest of all people? None are more foolish than those who have beheld salvation but do not pursue to gain it; these are people who gorge themselves on the flesh and enjoy Satan. You hope that your faith in God will not entail any challenges or tribulations, or the slightest hardship. You always pursue those things that are worthless, and you attach no value to life, instead putting your own extravagant thoughts before the truth. You are so worthless! You live like a pig—what difference is there between you, and pigs and dogs? Are those who do not pursue the truth, and instead love the flesh, not all beasts? Are those dead ones without spirits not all walking corpses? How many words have been spoken among you? Has only a little work been done among you? How much have I provided among you? So why have you not gained it? What do you have to complain of? Is it not the case that you have gained nothing because you are too in**

love with the flesh? And is it not because your thoughts are too extravagant? Is it not because you are too stupid? If you are incapable of gaining these blessings, can you blame God for not saving you? ... A coward such as you, who always pursues the flesh—do you have a heart, do you have a spirit? Are you not a beast? I give you the true way without asking for anything in return, yet you do not pursue. Are you one of those who believe in God? I bestow real human life upon you, yet you do not pursue. Are you no different from a pig or a dog? Pigs do not pursue the life of man, they do not pursue being cleansed, and they do not understand what life is. Each day, after eating their fill, they simply sleep. I have given you the true way, yet you have not gained it: You are empty-handed. Are you willing to continue in this life, the life of a pig? What is the significance of such people being alive? Your life is contemptible and ignoble, you live amid filth and licentiousness, and you do not pursue any goals; is your life not the most ignoble of all? Do you have the gall to look upon God? If you continue to experience in this way, will you not acquire nothing? The true way has been given to you, but whether or not you can ultimately gain it depends on your own personal pursuit” (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). I read this passage over and over. Every time I read the words “beasts,” “a pig or a dog,” and “ignoble” in particular, it felt just like a slap across the face. I asked myself: “Why do I actually believe in God? Is it just to enjoy comfort? Why do I have such lowly pursuits in life, even after reading so much of God’s word?” I felt like I really had been deeply corrupted by Satan. Satanic philosophies like “Life is just about eating and dressing,” “Seize the day for pleasure, for life is short,” and “Drink today’s wine today, and worry about tomorrow, tomorrow” were my words to live

by. I saw physical comfort and enjoyment as my main pursuits in life. I remembered all my classmates were studying like crazy before high school entrance exams, but I felt that was too stressful, so I'd just go to the playground to relax. I felt I should treat myself well in life and enjoy each moment as it came, no matter what tomorrow brought. My classmates said I was really laid-back and I felt it was a good way to live. I was happy every day without any stress or worries. That was the life I wanted. I didn't change this perspective after gaining faith and taking on a duty. When something complicated or difficult came up, I'd think it was a hassle and want to avoid it, unwilling to have a little physical discomfort or strain. I liked to have nothing to do, loaf around free and easy. But what did I actually gain from living that way? I made no progress in my duty, and I frittered away my character and dignity because I was irresponsible and held up the church's work. I had disgusted God, and the brothers and sisters were annoyed. These satanic perspectives on survival do so much harm! Living this way, I was without any integrity or dignity, and without any correct goals in life. It was so vile! In reality, when I encountered difficulties in my duty, it was God's will for me to seek the truth and come to understand and gain the truth. But I didn't treasure this and I threw away so many chances to gain the truth. The Bible says, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (Proverbs 1:32). That's so true. It says in God's words: **"Man's flesh is like the snake: Its substance is to harm their lives—and when it completely gets its own way, your life becomes forfeit"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). I thought of how I'd treated my duty lightly time after time, how I had damaged the work, and I felt indebted to God. I was filled with unhappiness and remorse, and I started crying nonstop. These things are all stains on my history of faith in God that can never be washed away, and I'll always regret it! I

despised myself from the bottom of my heart. In tears, I prayed, “God, I’ve disappointed You. I’ve been a believer for years without ever pursuing the truth, only transient comforts of the flesh. I’m so depraved! God, I’ve finally seen the essence of the flesh and though I may never be able to make up for my transgressions, I want to repent, pursue the truth, and make a new start.”

A sister later sent me a passage of God’s words which allowed me to find a path of practice and entry. God’s words say: **“When people have thoughts, they have choices. If something happens to them and they make the wrong choice, they should turn themselves around and make the right choice; they absolutely must not stick by their mistake. People like this are smart. But if they know they made the wrong choice and don’t turn themselves around, then they are someone who does not love the truth, and such a person does not truly want God. Say, for example, you want to be careless and sloppy when you perform your duty. You try to slack off, and try to avoid God’s scrutiny. At such times, hurry before God to pray, and reflect on whether this was the right way to act. Then think about it: ‘Why do I believe in God? Such sloppiness might get past people, but will it get past God? What’s more, my belief in God is not to slack off—it is in order to be saved. My acting thus is not the expression of normal humanity, nor is it beloved by God. No, I could slack off and do as I pleased in the outside world, but now I am in the house of God, I am under the sovereignty of God, under the scrutiny of God’s eyes. I am a person, I must act according to my conscience, I cannot do as I please. I must act according to God’s words, I must not be careless and perfunctory, I cannot slack off. So how should I act to not slack off, to not be careless and perfunctory? I must put in some effort. Just now I felt it was too much trouble to do it**

like this, I wanted to avoid hardship, but now I understand: It may be a lot of trouble to do it like that, but it is effective, and so that is how it should be done.’ When you are working and still feel afraid of hardship, at such times you must pray to God: ‘Oh God! I am lazy and deceitful, I beg You to discipline me, to reproach me, so that my conscience feels something, and I have a sense of shame. I don’t want to be careless and perfunctory. I beg You to guide and enlighten me, to show me my rebelliousness and my ugliness.’ When you pray thus, reflect and try to know yourself, this will give rise to a feeling of regret, and you will be able to hate your ugliness, and your wrong state will begin to change, and you will be capable of contemplating this and saying to yourself, ‘Why am I careless and perfunctory? Why am I always trying to slack off? Acting like this is devoid of any conscience or sense—am I still someone who believes in God? Why don’t I take things seriously? Don’t I just need to put in a little more time and effort? It’s no great burden. This is what I ought to be doing; if I can’t even do this, am I fit to be called a human being?’ As a result, you will make a resolution and swear an oath: ‘Oh God! I have let You down, I truly am too deeply corrupted, I am without conscience or sense, I have no humanity, I wish to repent. I beg You to forgive me, I will surely change. If I do not repent, I would that You punish me.’ Afterward, your mentality will turn around, and you will begin to change. You will act and perform your duties with conscientiousness, with less carelessness and perfunctoriness, and you will be able to suffer and pay a price. You will feel that performing your duty in this way is wonderful, and you will have peace and joy in your heart” (The Word, Vol.

3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Treasuring God’s Words Is the Foundation of Belief in God). I saw from God’s words that the most basic thing we should do as

people is to throw ourselves into our duty. No matter how hard it is, whether it's simple or complicated, we should fulfill our responsibilities and do it seriously and wholeheartedly. We should do everything we can. That's the proper attitude toward duty. God's words point out a path of practice. When we want to start being treacherous and slippery, we need to accept God's scrutiny, pray, and forsake the flesh. Pondering God's words, I could feel His understanding and compassion for humans. He's so clear about these paths for practice and for entry so that we can live out a human likeness. After understanding God's will and requirement, I said a prayer and intentionally forsook my flesh.

Once, when I ran into a thorny problem again, and at the time, I had the urge to muddle through and just go through the motions, I said a prayer: "God, I'm thinking of being slippery in my duty again, but that's not how I want to approach it. Please guide me to forsake the flesh, practice the truth, and do my duty well." After I prayed, it occurred to me that though other people might not see me being treacherous and slippery, God would. He'd see if I was practicing the truth or going along with the flesh. At this thought, I quieted my heart to ponder how I should resolve the problem, and without me realizing it, some principles became clearer to me. The problem was solved really quickly. After practicing that way a few times, my heart was really calmed and I felt that it was a great way to do my duty. Also, those moments of panic about being transferred from my duty I had had in the past disappeared.

Being able to change a bit was God's salvation for me, and I woke up bit by bit through the judgment, revelation, and sustenance of God's words. Thanks be to God!

66. An Indelible Decision

By Bai Yang, China

When I was 15 years old, my dad died from a sudden illness. My mom couldn't bear this blow and she became very sick. None of our relatives came to help us because they were afraid of having to bail us out, and I felt so hopeless. My dad was gone, so if something happened to my mom, I didn't know what my sister and I would do. Later, someone preached the gospel of the Lord Jesus to us. With the Lord's grace, my mom got better after attending just two congregations. That's how we came to believe in the Lord. When I found out that He had been crucified to redeem mankind, I was moved by God's great love. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples: **"Follow Me"** (John 1:43), and, **"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"** (John 16:33). These words comforted me a lot. I felt particularly inspired when I heard about the experiences of Western missionaries who had dedicated their lives to the Lord, so I made a resolution to the Lord to expend myself for Him and preach the gospel to many more people. Back then, I felt that there was no meaning to any worldly pursuits. Only following the Lord, working and preaching for Him, and bringing more people before Him felt meaningful and worthwhile. I often looked forward to the day I could leave home to go preach and work for the Lord. When my mom found out about this, she scolded me, "How can you be so stupid? Why would you pray for that? You should believe in the Lord, but you can't give up your studies! You just got into high school, you should be focusing on your academic work. Our relatives won't think well of you if you're not successful." This made me hesitate. I thought, "She's right. All of my family's hopes are on my

shoulders. If I give up my studies to preach the gospel, my mom will be really hurt. It's been hard enough for her to support us, I can't cause her any more pain." So I quietly buried my desire to preach and work for the Lord.

In July 2001, I'd just taken the college entrance examination when I met some brothers and sisters who were spreading the kingdom gospel. By reading Almighty God's words, my sister and I determined that Almighty God was the Lord Jesus returned. I was thrilled. The Lord I'd long awaited had finally returned, and God was truly showing me immense grace by allowing me to hear His voice with my own ears and to accept His personal guidance and salvation. When I read the Bible, I used to envy the Lord's disciples for being able to listen to His teachings all the time. I never imagined I would be as lucky as them. But many people who yearned for the Lord's appearance still didn't know that He had returned. As I'd heard this great news before them, I knew I had to hurry to spread the kingdom gospel. I thought: "It'll be great if I don't get into college. Then I'll have the perfect reason to tell my mom that I'm going out to preach the gospel."

Over a week later, my teacher was thrilled to tell me that I'd gotten into a good college. My classmates praised me, saying, "They only admitted ten people from our province out of thousands of applicants. You've really done well to get into that college." My mom looked so happy when she heard that, but I felt terrible. I was certain that she wouldn't allow me to give up my studies to spread the gospel. When our relatives found out that I had gotten into college, they all came to congratulate me. When I saw my mom happily chatting with them, I knew that our relatives respected her more because I had gotten into college, and that she was so proud of me. If I chose not to go to college, my mom would definitely be devastated and all of our relatives would look down on our family again, like they had before. When I recalled how my mom had often lamented the way our relatives

used to scorn us, I thought: “Raising us has been so hard for my mom. If I don’t do what she wants, wouldn’t I really be letting her down?” And so, I felt I had no choice: I had to go to college. When I started college, I discovered that there was a huge gap between poor and wealthy students. The children from wealthy families looked down on the poor students and ordered them around. My classmates were just deceiving and using each other, and there was no one there that I could speak to honestly and confide in. I was disgusted by all this, I began to miss the church life and the brothers and sisters back home even more. I wanted so badly to leave college and return to them.

After more than three months of struggling to get through college life, it was time for winter break, and I was able to return to the church life again. I was so happy, and I made up my mind to tell my mom that I was quitting school no matter what.

The first day back home, I listened to a hymn of God’s words: **“Pure Love Without Blemish.”**

1 “Love” refers to an affection that is pure and without blemish, where you use your heart to love, to feel, and to be thoughtful. In love there are no conditions, no barriers, and no distance. In love there is no suspicion, no deceit, and no cunning. In love there is no trade and nothing impure. If you love, then you will not deceive, complain, betray, rebel, exact, or seek to gain something or to gain a certain amount.

2 “Love” refers to an affection that is pure and without blemish, where you use your heart to love, to feel, and to be thoughtful. In love there are no conditions, no barriers, and no distance. In love there is no suspicion, no deceit, and no cunning. In love there is no trade and

nothing impure. If you love, then you will gladly dedicate yourself, will gladly suffer hardship, you will be compatible with God, you will forsake all that you have for God, you will give up your family, your future, your youth, and your marriage. If not, your love would not be love at all, but deceit and betrayal!

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Many Are Called, but Few Are Chosen

God's words deeply moved and inspired me, but I also felt remorseful and guilty. I'd made a resolution to spend my whole life following God, to pursue knowledge of Him and love Him. In love, there is no deceit or betrayal. If you truly love Him, then you will devote yourself to Him and give up everything for Him. But my love for Him was just words. When it came down to something real, I only thought about my family and my emotional ties to my mom. Where was the love in that? I'd just been deceiving and betraying God. I then read a passage of God's words: **"For everyone who aspires to love God, there are no unobtainable truths and no justice for which they cannot stand firm. How should you live your life? How should you love God, and use this love to satisfy His desire? There is no greater matter in your life. Above all, you must have such aspirations and perseverance, and should not be like those who are spineless, those who are weaklings. You must learn how to experience a meaningful life and experience meaningful truths, and should not treat yourself perfunctorily in that way. Without you realizing it, your life will pass you by; after that, will you have another opportunity to love God? Can man love God after he is dead? You must have the same aspirations and conscience as Peter; your life must be meaningful, and you must not play games with yourself. As a human being, and as a person who pursues God, you must be able to carefully consider how you treat your life, how you should offer yourself to God, how you**

should have a more meaningful faith in God, and how, since you love God, you should love Him in a way that is more pure, more beautiful, and more good” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). I felt God’s hopes for man through His words. It’s so rare to meet God even once in our lives. Two thousand years ago, the Lord Jesus’ disciples met with Him, and now, two thousand years later, God was offering me a once-in-a-lifetime chance to follow Him, to seek knowledge of Him, and to love Him. If I kept pursuing the worldly path of Satan because I couldn’t overcome my emotional ties to my mom and was afraid of hurting her, wouldn’t I be wasting my time? I thought of Peter. His parents also wanted him to become an official but he wasn’t constrained by his emotional ties to them. He chose to follow and sought to love God and, in the end, he was perfected by the Lord. I knew that I ought to follow Peter’s example and pursue knowledge and love of God. That’s the most meaningful life. After that, I no longer felt constrained by my emotional ties to my mom.

The day before school was going to start again, I very earnestly told my mom, “I don’t want to go back to college.” When she heard this, she immediately scolded me, saying, “I know you want to give up school and believe in God instead, but you can’t, so just forget that idea!” I said, “God made us all. We should worship Him. That is what has been ordained by Heaven. The Bible also teaches us: ‘Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him’ (1 John 2:15). We believers in God shouldn’t walk a secular path in pursuit of worldly prospects. That’s not God’s will. I want to follow God and do my duty.” My mom then said, “We’re not like other families. Your dad died young, we have no money, and our relatives look down on us. What have I been suffering and exhausting myself for over all these years? I

did it so you could go to college, be a success, and have a good life! It's been so hard. You're almost at the finish line but you want to quit the race. How could you hurt me like this?" I began to weaken when she said that. I thought: "She's right. If I finish college and get a good job, then our family will have money, and our relatives won't look down on my mom anymore." But then I thought: "We may live a good material life and be looked up to by other people, but what does that matter? When God's work is over, this world of Satan will be destroyed. Only Christ's kingdom will remain, and all pleasures and vanities will be gone in a flash." So I said to my mom, "We're just sojourners here on earth. No matter how hard we work, or how well we live, when God's work of salvation is over, mankind will be faced with the great disasters and these 'good' lives of ours will be destroyed. No matter how much money we have, we won't be able to enjoy it. The Lord Jesus said: **'What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'** (Matthew 16:26)." My mom cut me off saying, "I don't object to you believing in God. Just don't be so serious about it. You should believe in God, but don't completely give up on the world, or else how will you have a happy life? How could I have raised you both without earning money?" When she said this, I realized that her faith in the Lord was just words. She had a foot in both camps: She wanted to believe in God and receive blessings, but she wanted the world, too. All I could do was keep trying to persuade her, saying, "Without God's blessing, people can't become wealthy, no matter how hard they work. God ordains how much wealth we have in our lives, and without the truth, any amount of wealth is meaningless." She wouldn't listen and was determined to oppose my wishes. She then called my relatives and asked them to come and talk me out of it. Seeing that my mom wouldn't budge really upset me. I had no

idea what would happen next, so I hurried to say a silent prayer to God, asking Him to guard me so that I could keep standing my ground.

In no time at all, all of my relatives had come over. As soon as my uncle arrived, he said angrily, “What’s all this about God? You’re too young to be so superstitious!” My aunt said, “Your mom just wants what’s best for you.” They all joined in, scolding me one after another. I knew they were atheists and that they wouldn’t listen to me, no matter what I said. If I spoke up, they’d just say more blasphemous and resistant words about God, so I said nothing. I didn’t expect my uncle to suddenly say to my mom in such a fierce way, “She believes in God because she’s afraid of dying in the disasters, so let her die before the disasters. Call the cops and let them beat her with electric batons, see if she still believes then!” I never thought my own uncle would say such an atrocious thing. I thought: “Is this my relative, or a devil?” To my surprise, my mom chimed in, saying, “She needs discipline, she’s so disobedient!” It broke my heart to see her side with them and try to force me to give up my faith. My cousin then spoke up saying, “If you stop believing and focus on getting through college, then we’ll all support you. We’ll help you take care of your mom and we’ll help your sister find a good job. But if you keep your faith, we’ll cut off all ties with your family, and from then on, no matter what hardships you face, we won’t help any of you. We won’t be family anymore. Think carefully!” I was certain that he just wanted to make me stop following Christ. Not one of them had helped us while I was studying at high school for three years! Now I wanted to follow God and walk the right path, they’d all come to stop me, saying “nice” things to mislead me. It was Satan’s scheme, and I couldn’t fall for it. But then I thought: “If I really don’t go back to college, my mom will be so hurt. She’s suffered enough over these past years. How will I live with myself if I cause her even more pain?” After thinking this, I

hurried to say a silent prayer to God, “Dear God, I know that following You and pursuing the truth is the right path, but I feel conflicted when I think of my mom. I don’t know what to do. Please enlighten and help me.” Afterward, I thought of Almighty God’s words that say: **“The amount an individual must suffer and the distance they must walk on their path is ordained by God, and no one can really help anyone else”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (6)). I suddenly understood. “Yes,” I thought. “God ordains how much each person should suffer. It’s not something that any person can decide, and I can’t lessen my mom’s suffering or stop her from suffering just by making lots of money and handing it over to her. The root of our pain is Satan’s corruption and all the satanic poisons and wild desires we have within us. If people don’t worship God and accept His judgment in order to be cleansed, they’ll never be free of pain. But when people believe in God and pursue the truth, even if they suffer a little physical pain, if they can understand the truth, expend themselves for God, testify to God, find peace and joy, stop being fooled and corrupted by Satan, and gain freedom and liberation, they’ll have the happiest life. I used to think that studying hard, earning lots of money, and winning others’ esteem would ease my mom’s suffering. But that was just absurd. I almost fell into Satan’s trap.” With these thoughts, my resolve strengthened. No matter what blasphemous and slanderous things they said, it had no effect on me. Seeing that I was staying silent, my mom got really angry. She shoved me and threw me down on my bed. I was shocked that she would do that to me. I felt really upset and couldn’t help but start to cry. I kept silently praying to God, asking Him to keep me, so that I could stand firm in my witness under these circumstances and not give in to my family. I thought of what Almighty God says: **“Young people should have the perseverance to continue along the way of truth that they have now**

chosen—to realize their wish to expend their entire lives for Me. They should not be without the truth, nor should they harbor hypocrisy and unrighteousness—they should stand firm in the proper stance. They should not just drift along, but should have the spirit to dare to make sacrifices and to struggle for justice and truth. Young people should have the bravery to not succumb to oppression by the forces of darkness and to transform the significance of their existence” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Words for the Young and the Old). God’s words gave me faith, strength, and the confidence to stick to the path I’d chosen.

After that, my mom stopped going to work and stayed at home watching me and my sister like a hawk. She searched through my things for my books of God’s words and hymn cassettes and said angrily, “From now on, neither of you are allowed to go to gatherings. I’m going to stay at home watching you, and I’ll follow you wherever you go. I’m going to find your gathering place!” I felt like I was under house arrest. I couldn’t read God’s words and I didn’t dare talk to my sister about our faith, much less live the church life. It was very distressing. I kept praying to God, asking Him to show us a way out. A few days later at midday, my mom was in the bathroom, so I seized the opportunity to sprint over to Sister Tang Hui’s house, who was our church leader. I told her what had happened and my thoughts about it. I said, “Following God is the path of the light and of salvation. I want to do my duty in the church, but my mom keeps trying to constrain and stop me. Now my sister and I can’t attend gatherings normally. I feel so upset. Why do all these things keep happening to us?” Tang Hui then patiently fellowshiped with me, saying, “When a person faces pressure from their family members, it is actually Satan’s disturbance and manipulation. We want to expend ourselves for God, but Satan uses our family members to stop us and exploits our weaknesses to attack us so that

we will betray God and lose our chance at salvation. We should rely on God to see through Satan's schemes." She then read me a passage of God's words: **"In every step of work that God does within people, externally it appears to be interactions between people, as if born of human arrangements or from human disturbance. But behind the scenes, every step of work, and everything that happens, is a wager made by Satan before God, and requires people to stand firm in their testimony to God. Take when Job was tried, for example: Behind the scenes, Satan was making a bet with God, and what happened to Job was the deeds of men and the disturbance of men. Behind every step of work that God does in you is Satan's wager with God—behind it all is a battle. ... When God and Satan do battle in the spiritual realm, how should you satisfy God, and how should you stand firm in your testimony to Him? You should know that everything that happens to you is a great trial and the time when God needs you to bear testimony"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). These words showed me that if I wanted to follow Christ in this dark and evil world, it wasn't going to be easy. It would be filled with spiritual battles and hard choices. Almighty God's work of judgment in the last days is the final and most crucial stage of His work of cleansing and saving man. God hopes that everyone will gain the truth and the life from Him, that we will all be saved and survive. But He doesn't force people, He lets us choose for ourselves. My mom had been misled and fooled by Satan, so she couldn't see how empty the pursuit of prestige and status is, and kept forcing me to go to college, to study and be successful. I couldn't follow her in choosing the wrong path. Tang Hui went on fellowshiping, saying, "You see how meaningless it is to pursue knowledge and future prospects, you've sworn to expend yourself for God, and you have chosen the path of

pursuing the truth. This pleases God. But what you choose for your own path in life is all up to you, and you must pray and seek more on this.” I thought, “Though I have sworn to follow Christ, right now my mom is watching me like a hawk, and says that she’s going to find out where we gather. If I insist on not going back to college, she’ll surely cause trouble for the brothers and sisters.” And so, I promised my mom that I’d go back to college.

When I got there, I applied to the college to suspend my studies. The college approved my application, but I still needed the consent of my guardian. When my mom found out, she was staunchly opposed to it. She cried and cried about how she’d suffered, and how hard it’d been raising me and my sister, and wouldn’t let me suspend my studies. Seeing her this way really upset me, and I thought, “My mom really struggled to raise us and I haven’t repaid her. If I don’t do what she wants, won’t I really be letting her down?” I hurriedly prayed to God, saying, “Dear God, what should I do? Please enlighten me and help me.” Just then, a passage of God’s words came to my mind: **“When the warmth of spring arrives and the flowers blossom, when all beneath the heavens is covered in green and all things on earth are in place, then all people and things shall gradually enter into God’s chastisement, and at that time all of God’s work on earth will end. God shall no longer work or live on earth, for God’s great work will have been accomplished. Are people incapable of putting aside their flesh for this short time? What things can cleave the love between man and God? Who is able to pull apart the love between man and God? Is it parents, husbands, sisters, wives, or painful refinement? Can the feelings of conscience wipe away God’s image within man? Are people’s indebtedness and actions toward each other their own doing? Can they be remedied by man? Who is able to protect**

themselves? Are people able to provide for themselves? Who are the strong ones in life? Who is able to leave Me and live on their own?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of "God's Words to the Entire Universe", Chapters 24 and 25). God's words showed me that every person lives under the sovereignty and ordination of God. It appeared as though my mom had raised me but really our lives come from God. It's God who provides for us and raises us. By raising their children, parents are just performing a human responsibility and obligation—no one owes anyone anything. God had provided everything I needed to survive and arranged all manner of people, events, and things to lead me before Him step by step and accept His salvation. God's love is so great! I'd enjoyed so much care, protection, and provision from God, but I hadn't repaid Him at all. And when some difficulties befell me, the promise I'd made to God became a lie. It was God, the Creator, to whom I truly owed a debt. Thinking of how God's current work on earth would be short, just like the Lord Jesus' work had been, I knew that I had to cherish this rare chance to do my duty as a created being and repay His love. And just when I decided to follow Christ, things changed unexpectedly. My mom heard that if I missed too many classes I'd be expelled, and she was afraid that I wouldn't be able to go to college anymore, so she let me suspend my studies and come home. When I got home, she warned me, "You are not allowed to believe in God anymore. You're going to behave yourself, find a job nearby, and work for a year, and then you're going to obediently return to college." I promised her that I would, but inside I thought, "God has ordained for me to follow Christ now, and this is my choice. I won't give it up easily."

So, I found a job, attended both work and church gatherings, and preached the gospel with the other brothers and sisters in my free time. By practicing and experiencing God's words, I gradually came to understand

some truths and I realized that pursuing the truth is the most meaningful life, and I gained more faith to follow God. Before I knew it, it was time to go back to school and I had to make my final decision: I chose faith in God! When I got home that day, I found my mom packing her things. I discovered that a neighbor had introduced a man to my mom and that she was going to marry him. I was really surprised and hurt, and I asked her if she didn't want us anymore. She said, "The problem isn't that I don't want you, it's that you're determined to believe in God and I can't count on you anymore. I'll give you one last chance. This is my fiancé's phone number. If you go back to school, call this number when you come home for the holidays and we'll come get you. But if you and your sister insist on keeping your faith, then I won't be around to help you anymore." Before I could think about it more, my mom took us to the bus to school. On the way, I thought a lot. In just a day, my sister and I had become homeless and no longer had anyone to depend on. It was really distressing. My sister said helplessly, "Mom doesn't want us anymore. What will we do if you don't go back to school?" My sister's words cut right to the most tender part of my heart. I thought, "Yes, now our relatives have deserted us, and mom is marrying someone else. How will we live if I keep my faith in God? Where should we go? What on earth should I do?" I felt really pained and weak, so I prayed to God. I said, "Dear God, I really can't overcome this. I want to satisfy You, but I'm all out of faith and strength to carry on. I know You've done so much for me, but I'm too weak. I'm not worthy of Your salvation." Just then, a passage of God's words appeared very clearly in my mind: **"When the day comes for this work to spread and you see the entirety of it, you will regret, and at that time you will be dumbfounded. There are blessings, yet you do not know to enjoy them, and there is the truth, yet you do not pursue it. Do you not bring contempt upon yourself? ...**

None are more foolish than those who have beheld salvation but do not pursue to gain it; these are people who gorge themselves on the flesh and enjoy Satan” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). It was true. God’s work would soon be over and I’d seen the true way. If I chose to satisfy my flesh because I couldn’t bear to suffer, when God’s work ended I would have missed this once-in-a-lifetime chance to gain the truth, and I’d certainly regret it. I thought about the past year that I’d spent doing my duty in the church. Watered and nourished by God’s words, I’d understood some truths and gradually gained insight into many things about the world. I saw that only Almighty God’s words can cleanse and save people and that following Christ is the path of the light and of salvation. I couldn’t keep hesitating. My life came from God and He’d given me everything. Doing my duty as a created being is perfectly natural and justified! My mom didn’t support my faith and wanted me to pursue knowledge and become a success. If I did what she wanted and chose the wrong path, I’d just be corrupted deeper and deeper by Satan, and I’d end up being punished and destroyed. Knowledge couldn’t free me from my corrupt dispositions or cleanse and change me. Only God can save us. If my family didn’t want me, I still had God. When I looked back on all that had happened, I realized that every time I had felt negative and weak, it was God’s words that had supported me, helped me, and given me strength. When I’d been about to turn away from God in my most agonizing and weakest moments, His words had stirred my heart. In this world, only God’s love for me is real! When I thought this, my faith returned. I wiped away my tears and told my sister, “God is the only One we can rely on. We must have faith that He’ll guide us. Let’s go back to the brothers and sisters.” The next day, we got the bus back home and after that

we started performing our duties. Thanks be to God! God's words led me to overcome fleshly weakness and choose this bright and correct path in life.

67. After My Dad's Expulsion

By Isabella, France

A few years ago, I was doing my duty away from home when I suddenly got word that my father had been defined as an evildoer and expelled from the church. It was said that he hadn't had a positive role in the church, spreading notions and negativity, and curbing people's enthusiasm for their duty. The brothers and sisters fellowshiped and dealt with him numerous times but he didn't accept any of it, and was hostile to those who exposed and dealt with him. I was really taken aback by the news. I knew he was temperamental, but I felt like he had good humanity, he was loving to the brothers and sisters, and was always helping them with difficulties they had in life. Our neighbors all said he was really helpful and loving, so why would he suddenly be expelled for being evil? Ever since accepting God's work of the last days in 2001, he'd been spreading the gospel and performing his duty. He'd slept in piles of firewood and in graveyards to escape arrest by the CCP. He had suffered greatly, and although he hadn't done anything too remarkable, he'd worked hard for years. How could he be kicked out, just like that? I wondered if the church leader had handled it wrong. Why didn't he get a chance to repent? For a while, any thought of my dad was really painful, and I felt bad for him.

About a year later I came back to my hometown for my duty. At first when I saw my dad, I still felt really bad for him and wanted to do whatever I could for him. He took great care of me, too. But I gradually realized that there was something off in the way he talked. He was always saying negative things that could make someone misunderstand and distance themselves from God, and feel depressed. Take my mother, for example. She had been a church leader, but she was transferred for having poor

caliber and not doing practical work, so she was in a negative state for a while. My dad did not fellowship on God's will to help her, but said, "There's no security in God's house, and everyone will be dismissed one day. Didn't God know if your caliber was lacking? God set this up for you on purpose, selecting you as leader and then dismissing you so you'd suffer. Your low caliber has been determined by God. If God doesn't give you good caliber, you'll never do your duty well!" After he said that, my mom's state worsened. I was really angry when I heard about what he'd said, and felt like he was really unreasonable. It was a normal change of duty in the church, but he said it was God intentionally making someone suffer. That's just not accurate. The church arranges and adjusts people's duties based on their strengths, on the one hand so that the church's work develops smoothly and is more successful. On the other, it's to enable people to know their own caliber and stature, so they can find a suitable duty and position and make better use of their strengths and do their part. This arrangement is entirely in line with the principles and is beneficial to the church's work and people's life entry. My mom was transferred from her leadership position, but she was doing another duty that suited her, and she could use this failure to know herself and to learn a lesson. Wasn't that a good thing? How could my father bend the truth? There was also a brother in the church who had quit his job so he could do his duty full time. When his duty wasn't too demanding, he found a side job to earn some money. It was hard labor, and he made a living while performing his duty. He'd never done anything so physically demanding, and when he was worn out he'd feel really down. When my dad found out, he actually said to the brother, "My family used to be fairly well off, but since believing in God we've always been making sacrifices. Now we hardly have any money, and I have to do hard labor. You're giving up plenty already, but one day you might really be crying...."

I was shocked to hear him say that. Why would he fellowship with the brother like that? When people give up everything to expend themselves for God, although in their material life they may not be very wealthy, and they may suffer a little, what they receive is truth and life. That is something that cannot be replaced with any amount of money. What my father had said didn't accord with the truth. Our lives weren't much harder than they used to be, and so many times when my dad had problems finding work or difficulties in life, God opened up a path for him, helping him find a suitable job to keep making a living. Before gaining faith, he was always smoking and drinking and his health was terrible. His hands would shake when holding his rice bowl. He quit drinking after he believed in God and spent his time doing his duty and fellowshiping with the brothers and sisters, so his health got better and better. Everyone who saw him said how great he looked, that he looked like a new man. Our family had received so much grace from God, but my dad didn't mention any of that, instead just twisting things and complaining, deliberately leading people to misunderstand and blame God, intentionally disrupting their relationship with God, leading them away from God and to betray God.

There were lots of things like that. After I gave up my studies to do my duty full time in the church, he was always saying, "You're expending so much without leaving yourself an exit. You'll regret it one day." That just didn't sound right to me. For a created being to do their duty in the church was right and proper. It was my responsibility and my obligation. I gave up my studies of my own free will. Being able to believe in and follow God and do my duty in the church was God's grace to me. And all these years performing my duty in the church, I'd understood some truths, and gained things I'd never have got in the outside world. I know what people should pursue in life and I understand plenty of things in the world a lot better. I

don't follow evil secular trends like young people who are unbelievers. These are very real things that I've gained that I couldn't have gotten at school. But my dad made expending in one's duty for God into a negative thing. Wasn't that spreading negativity and death? I shot back, "I won't regret it! Maybe I haven't been studying for a few years, and doing my duty instead, but I've learned a lot of truths and gained so much. I'd never get that out of books. What you're saying isn't in line with the truth." I was shocked when his temper flared up, and he clenched his fist in anger like he was going to punch me. Then I realized that my dad wasn't the person I'd thought he was. I'd always judged him based on his external good deeds, not the truth principles. I'd always seen my dad as so concerned about and caring for me, outwardly loving toward other brothers and sisters, and as someone whose humanity was not bad. But behind his nice behavior, something sinister was in his heart. He had enormous notions about God and His work. His words seemed to be comforting and understanding, thinking about our options, but in fact he was spreading notions about God, getting people to misunderstand and blame God. Accepting them would cause us to develop notions and misunderstandings about God, or even want to stop believing, stop doing our duty and expending for God, and go back out into the world. It was really misleading!

Later on I read some of God's words that addressed his behavior. Almighty God says: **"Those among brothers and sisters who are always giving vent to their negativity are lackeys of Satan, and they disturb the church. Such people must one day be expelled and cast out. In their belief in God, if people do not have a God-fearing heart, if they do not have a God-obeying heart, then not only will they be unable to do any work for Him, but on the contrary will become those who disturb His work and who defy Him. Believing in God but not obeying or fearing**

Him, and instead resisting Him, is the greatest disgrace for a believer. If believers are just as casual and unrestrained in their speech and conduct as unbelievers are, then they are even more evil than unbelievers; they are archetypal demons. ... All who have been corrupted by Satan have corrupt dispositions. Some have nothing more than corrupt dispositions, while others are different: Not only do they have corrupt satanic dispositions, but their nature is also extremely malicious. Not only do their words and actions reveal their corrupt, satanic dispositions; these people are, moreover, the genuine devil Satan. Their behavior disrupts and disturbs God's work, it disturbs the brothers' and sisters' life entry, and it damages the normal life of the church. Sooner or later, these wolves in sheep's clothing must be cleared out; an unsparing attitude, an attitude of rejection, should be adopted toward these lackeys of Satan. Only this is standing on the side of God, and those who fail to do so are wallowing in the mire with Satan” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). “People who do not strive for progress always wish for others to be as negative and indolent as themselves. Those who do not practice the truth are jealous of those who do, and always try to deceive those who are muddle-headed and lack discernment. The things these people give vent to can cause you to degenerate, slip downward, develop an abnormal state, and be filled with darkness. They cause you to become distant from God, and to cherish the flesh and indulge yourself. People who do not love the truth and who are always perfunctory toward God have no self-awareness, and the disposition of such people seduces others into committing sins and defying God. They do not practice the truth, nor do they allow others to practice it. They cherish sin and have no loathing of themselves. They do not know

themselves, and they stop others from knowing themselves; they also stop others from desiring the truth. Those they deceive cannot see the light. They fall into darkness, do not know themselves, are unclear about the truth, and become more and more distant from God” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). Pondering this, I saw that those who are always spreading notions and negativity among the brothers and sisters belong to Satan. People like that are acting as Satan’s lackeys, disturbing and misleading people, and keeping them from coming before God. My father saying things like this, and saying them all the time, wasn’t just showing momentary corruption or negativity and weakness. It was because he hated the truth and God in his nature essence, so when anything happened, the perspectives he expressed were entirely contrary to God’s words and the truth, they were all notions about God, to get people to misunderstand, blame, and betray Him. I saw he didn’t pursue the truth at all. He performed his duty merely to obtain blessings, and when he didn’t receive material blessings for his suffering and expenditure, he felt like he’d been wronged, and was even full of resentment and hostility to God. He couldn’t follow the path of faith, and wanted to rope others into distancing themselves from God, betraying God, and confronting God along with him. His words were full of Satan’s tricks, all to attack people’s drive for their duty and ruin their relationship with God. He was nothing but Satan’s minion, belonging to the devil. A normal person who was good-hearted wouldn’t deliberately do something like that, no matter how negative and weak they felt. Only a satanic demon would feel such great hostility to God. I increasingly felt that my father was frightening, that he wasn’t a good person, but an evildoer.

I read another passage of God’s words: **“It may be that in all your years of faith in God, you have never cursed anyone or committed a**

bad deed, yet in your association with Christ, you cannot speak the truth, act honestly, or obey the word of Christ; in that case, I say that you are the most sinister and malicious person in the world. You may be exceptionally amiable and devoted toward your relatives, friends, wife (or husband), sons and daughters, and parents, and never take advantage of others, but if you are incapable of compatibility with Christ, if you are unable to interact in harmony with Him, then even if you expend your all in relief to your neighbors or take meticulous care of your father, mother, and members of your household, I would say that you are still wicked, and moreover one full of cunning tricks” (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are Incompatible With Christ Are Surely Opponents of God). This helped me see that we can't tell a good person from an evil person by how they outwardly treat others, but by their attitude toward God and the truth. No matter how superficially nice they are or what people think of them, if they essentially hate the truth and God, they're an evildoer who's an enemy to God. Although my father was outwardly warmhearted, helping the brothers and sisters when they were lacking anything, was never miserly, and didn't spare any expense to host the brothers and sisters, although he looked like a good, kind-hearted person, in nature essence he was disgusted by the truth, he hated it. He clearly knew that God had already exposed our wrong views of having faith just to seek blessings, but when God arranged an environment inconsistent to his own notions, that didn't satisfy his desire for blessings, he turned ugly, was filled with notions about God, judged Him and even hated Him. Over all those years, he'd never reflected on himself or sought the truth, but kept judging God's work and spreading his notions about Him. The intentions in his words carried Satan's tricks, leaving people unwittingly negative and weak. It was really sinister. God evaluates people based on their essence, on their

attitude toward God and the truth. But I was evaluating my dad based on his outward presentation. Seeing he had some good behavior, I believed he was a good person and that the church should not have expelled him, so I wanted to advocate for him. I didn't understand the truth or use God's words as my rubric. I was so foolish. Understanding this, I felt that the church was definitely right to expel my father. He hated God and the truth, so for being expelled by the church he only had himself to blame. I no longer felt sorry for him. I felt free.

Then something else happened that gave me even more insight into him. My dad heard that a sister who had dealt with him before was dismissed from her duty. He was reveling in the news, and with a hateful gleam in his eyes, he clenched his teeth and said, "Remember how you dealt with me? You said I wasn't principled in my duty, I didn't practice the truth. Now it's your turn!" He had a really fierce look in his eyes and a scary look on his face. I saw he had no compassion whatsoever. When he was dealt with, he didn't seek the truth and learn a lesson, but hated that person for years because his pride was wounded. This further proved to me that my dad was in essence someone with a malicious heart, an evildoer who hated the truth. This was an evildoer showing his true colors, and it certainly was right to have him expelled from the church.

Later, God's house arranged for churches to check and see if anyone had been wrongly cleared out or expelled, or if any of those who had been cleared out or expelled had truly repented. For these individuals, the church could consider reinstating them according to principle. The new leader didn't know my father's situation. She saw my dad's superficial enthusiasm and willingness to host the brothers and sisters, that he helped them to find work, that he was really caring, and that he'd made some offerings. She therefore thought he might have been wrongly expelled, and wanted to

bring him back into the church. Hearing the leader say this, I was shocked, because I knew in my heart that his expulsion was entirely in line with principles, that it wasn't a mistaken expulsion. I said right away, "My dad can't be allowed back in." Not knowing my dad, she just fellowshiped on how people need chances to repent. At first I wanted to talk about his specific behaviors, but I hesitated, and didn't say anything. I was thinking that he was my dad who'd raised me all those years. If he knew I'd stood in the way of him being reaccepted, he'd be so hurt, and so mad at me! At that thought, I kept my mouth shut, but I felt really guilty after the leader walked off. Only my mom and I knew clearly about the matter of my father, and not speaking up at this critical time would be failing to protect the church's work. That night I was tossing and turning, and thought of a passage of God's words: **"Who is Satan, who are demons, and who are God's enemies if not resisters who do not believe in God? Are they not those people who are disobedient to God? Are they not those who claim to have faith, yet who lack truth? Are they not those who merely seek to obtain blessings while being unable to bear witness for God? You still mingle with those demons today and bear conscience and love toward them, but in this case are you not extending good intentions toward Satan? Are you not in league with demons? If people these days are still unable to distinguish between good and evil, and continue to blindly be loving and merciful without any intention of seeking God's will or being able in any way to harbor God's intentions as their own, then their endings will be all the more wretched. Anyone who does not believe in the God in the flesh is an enemy of God. If you can bear conscience and love toward an enemy, do you not lack a sense of righteousness? If you are compatible with those which I detest and with which I disagree, and still bear love or personal feelings toward them,**

then are you not disobedient? Are you not intentionally resisting God? Does such a person possess truth? If people bear conscience toward enemies, love for demons, and mercy for Satan, then are they not intentionally disrupting God's work?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). I felt terrible when I considered God's words. I knew very well that my dad hated the truth and resisted God, that he was an evildoer in essence. He didn't fit the church's principles for reinstating people. But I still wanted to cover up for him and shield him, and I was unable to expose his evil behavior. I was too sentimental. I was living by satanic philosophies like "Blood is thicker than water" and "Man is not inanimate; how can he be free from emotions?" I thought he was my dad, so I couldn't be too heartless, I had to be nice. I was afraid my dad would hate me if he found out I'd talked about his problems, that he'd call me ungrateful and say he'd raised me for so many years in vain. I wasn't looking at things according to God's words. I was protecting my father on the basis of emotion rather than protecting the work of the church. I was resisting and betraying God in everything that I did. My father's essence was that of an evildoer, and if he came back to the church, he'd just disrupt church life and hinder the life entry of the brothers and sisters. Didn't that make me an evildoer's helper? The more I thought about it, the worse I felt. Living by my emotions, I didn't know right from wrong, and had lost sight of the principles of being human.

I read a passage of God's word: **"By what principle do God's words ask that people treat others? Love what God loves, and hate what God hates: This is the principle that should be adhered to. God loves those who pursue the truth and are able to follow His will; these are also the people that we should love. Those who are not able to follow God's will, who hate and rebel against God—these people are despised by God,**

and we should despise them, too. This is what God asks of man. If your parents do not believe in God, if they know full well that faith in God is the right path, and that it can lead to salvation, yet remain unreceptive, then there is no doubt that they are people who are sick of and hate the truth, and that they are people who resist and hate God—and God naturally abhors and despises them. Could you despise such parents? They oppose and revile God—in which case they are surely demons and Satans. Could you abhor and curse them? These are all real questions. If your parents prevent you from believing in God, how should you treat them? As is asked by God, you should love what God loves, and hate what God hates. During the Age of Grace, the Lord Jesus said, ‘Who is My mother? And who are My brothers?’ ‘For whoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.’ These words already existed back in the Age of Grace, and now God’s words are even more clear: ‘Love what God loves, and hate what God hates.’ These words cut straight to the point, yet people are often unable to grasp their true meaning” (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Recognizing One’s Own Misguided Views Can One Truly Transform). God’s words gave me the principles I needed to apply to my dad. He was my father, but he was evil in nature essence. He hated the truth and was God’s enemy. He would only cause disruption in the church and harm to the brothers and sisters. God hates and is disgusted by people like that, and He doesn’t save evildoers. Just considering my affection and love for him would be cruel to the brothers and sisters, it would do harm to the church, and would be standing on the side of an evildoer in resisting God and being His enemy!

Later on, my mom and I fellowshiped on it, and we both felt it was God testing us, that we had to practice the truth and uphold the interests of

the church. If we covered up for and protected my dad and didn't bring his evil behavior to light, we'd have a part in his evil, and we'd be damned and punished by God, too. My dad hadn't yet been reinstated, but when the brothers and sisters visited us, he would still spread words of negativity and death that were disruptive to them. If he did come back, then any group he came in contact with would be hurt, and any church he came in contact with would be a church full of victims! If I ignored my conscience and kept quiet, that would damage the brothers and sisters, and would be disturbing the work of the church! I got more scared and realized that at this critical moment, protecting the work of the church or covering up for an evildoer involved the stance I took. The church leader didn't know my dad, thought he seemed like a good person on the surface, and was considering whether he should have another chance to return to the church. But we did know him, so we had to practice the truth and be honest, and report his evil behavior truthfully to our leader. A few days later the leader came to our home for a gathering. My mom and I opened up about my dad's evil behaviors, and in the end he wasn't invited back. I felt really at peace when I put this into practice.

At first I'd been taken in by my dad's surface behaviors and I didn't have any discernment of him. I couldn't tell a good from an evil person. Through my dad being expelled, I learned some truths and gained some discernment, and saw clearly the essence of my father as an evildoer. I overcame the restraints of sentimentality and treated him based on truth principles. That was God's protection and salvation for me! Thanks be to Almighty God!

68. Now I Know How to Bear Witness to God

By Xu Lu, China

In April 2021, I began work spreading the gospel with Sister Chen Zhengxin. Because I had already spread the gospel in the past and had some relevant experience, I started to get better results than her after a period of time. I would often brag about how I spread the gospel and answered potential gospel recipients' questions, going into a great amount of detail. Zhengxin was really in awe. Once, after I fellowshipped with some new believers that weren't attending gatherings, they all started attending as usual. I knew it was God guiding them and moving their hearts, but I was still quite pleased with myself, thinking I'd had my own part. Upon returning from fellowship, I couldn't help but brag to Zhengxin, saying, "I leaned on God and after just fellowshipping a few words, they all agreed to attend gatherings." Seeing how she looked at me with such admiration, I felt even better. Another time, she came back with her head hung in dejection because she couldn't answer the question of someone she was preaching to. I asked her what she had said to them, and she gave me a rundown. I thought to myself: "You don't have enough experience yet. This was not a difficult question to answer and I would have taken care of it in no time. I need to bring you up to speed and show you how sharing the gospel is really done." With that, I told her how to fellowship more effectively. Zhengxin agreed with what I had to say, saying she was really lacking, and asked me to help her out more. I told her we had to lean on God, but in my heart I was very pleased with myself, thinking of how talented I was at sharing the gospel.

In a gathering, a leader asked us what we'd learned and what experiences we'd had recently while spreading the gospel. Zhengxin said:

“I’ve learned through spreading the gospel that I still have so many inadequacies. There were so many questions from the potential gospel recipients that I couldn’t answer. Xu Lu seems to be able to find God’s words to fellowship and resolve their questions so quickly.” The leader smiled at me and nodded her head. I wanted to show the leader how much I knew and could answer any question with ease, so I intentionally took over speaking for Zhengxin, saying, “Some of the potential gospel recipients’ questions really were quite difficult to answer.” The leader asked, “Which questions?” I rapidly sifted through a number of questions, thinking that I should pick a difficult question to show the leader how talented I was. So, with lively gesticulations and a lively, excited demeanor, I recounted the potential gospel recipients’ questions, how I had fellowshipped to resolve them and how I had ultimately sincerely convinced them. I exaggerated, portraying things as more difficult than they were, as if others could never resolve these issues and I was the only one who could. I wanted the leader to think I had some truth reality, that I was the best among everyone sharing the gospel. The leader and other brothers and sisters all approved of me, and I was eating it up. After asking about our work sharing the gospel, the leader fellowshipped on the principles of sharing the gospel with respect to our recent issues. After the leader had only just begun her remarks, I thought to myself: “I have some relevant experience that I really should share right away. If we move on to another topic, I’ll miss my opportunity to speak.” So I cut in, saying: “There’s a lot more to it.” Then I launched into an extensive discussion, drawing from my own experience to elucidate how I had achieved results while spreading the gospel. Seeing everyone nod their heads in agreement, I spoke with even greater enthusiasm. The other brothers and sisters interjected with their own opinions but I wasn’t really taking anything in. I felt like they didn’t have any real insight or valuable

thoughts. I just kept sharing my views, not giving others a chance to talk. I just wanted to unload all of my experience all at once, so the leader would see I had caliber and gifts, could seek principles in my duty, and was a rare talent. While talking, it did occur to me that I might be showing off, so I tried to slow down and talk a bit about my corruption and errors. But I was also thinking that these practical methods should be fellowshiped for the greater good. This was all my own first-hand experience and I couldn't not fellowship out of fear of showing off. At that thought, I just kept rambling on. When I finished, the leader nodded her head in agreement and the others seemed to look at me with admiration. It was a wonderful feeling. So for that gathering, everyone was basically just listening to me talk. Not only that, but in gatherings and fellowship I hardly told the others about my negative states or examples of my failures in sharing the gospel. I felt like it would ruin my image, so I cherry-picked my successes. Everyone thought I was great at sharing the gospel after a few gatherings, and some other people in that duty started to rely on me. They'd directly ask me to speak with people really stuck in their notions. This all gave me an even higher opinion of myself, and I enjoyed the feeling of being looked up to. Just as I was feeling so pleased with myself, I was confronted with God's chastening and discipline.

I started running into lots of roadblocks and wasn't achieving any results while spreading the gospel. I thought to myself: "I'm always boasting and showing off in gatherings with the brothers and sisters, and now I've become ineffective at spreading the gospel. Is God disgusted with me and hiding Himself from me?" I opened up to Zhengxin about the state I was in and she said, "Over the time I've known you, I've noticed you tend to brag. You talked the whole time when the leader joined our gathering. You cut her off before she could finish speaking, and I couldn't even ask a

question. I felt so inferior after hearing about all of your experiences spreading the gospel and how effective you've been in resolving people's problems." As she spoke, she began to cry and I felt simply awful. I'd never imagined that my showing off had been so damaging to her. Wasn't that doing evil? I came before God to seriously reflect on myself, and then read these words of God: **"Everyone who walks the path of the antichrists exalts and bears testimony for themselves, promotes themselves and shows themselves off at every turn, and doesn't care about God at all. Have you experienced these things that I'm talking about? Many people persistently testify for themselves, talking about how they suffer this and that, how they work, how God values them, and entrusts to them some such work, and what they are like, deliberately using particular tones while speaking, and affecting certain manners, until eventually some people will probably begin to think that they are God. The Holy Spirit has long since abandoned those who reach this degree, and while they have not yet been cleared out or expelled, and are left instead to render service, their fate is already sealed and they are just awaiting their punishment"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. People Make Too Many Demands of God). The revelation of God's words cut to the quick and I felt truly awful. I realized that the reason I'd been hitting lots of stumbling blocks and couldn't feel God's guidance was because I had disgusted God with my boasting. God's disposition is so righteous and holy! I felt kind of scared. I knew that if I kept on that way, God would abandon and cast me out in disgust. I had to seek the truth to resolve this problem.

After that, I came across a passage of God's words exposing those that exalt themselves and show off. God says: **"Exalting and testifying to themselves, flaunting themselves, trying to make people think highly of**

them and worship them—corrupt mankind is capable of these things. This is how people instinctively react when they are governed by their satanic natures, and it is common to all of corrupt mankind. How do people usually exalt and testify to themselves? How do they achieve this aim of making people think highly of them and worship them? They testify to how much work they have done, how much they have suffered, how much they have expended themselves, and what price they have paid. They use these things as the capital by which they exalt themselves, which gives them a higher, firmer, more secure place in people's minds, so that more people esteem, admire, respect, and even venerate, idolize, and follow them. To achieve this aim, people do many things that testify to God on the surface, but essentially exalt and testify to themselves. Is acting that way reasonable? They are beyond the purview of rationality. These people have no shame: They unabashedly testify to what they have done for God and how much they have suffered for Him. They even flaunt their gifts, talents, experience, special skills, their clever techniques for conducting themselves, the means they use to toy with people, and so on. Their method of exalting and testifying to themselves is to flaunt themselves and belittle others. They also dissemble and camouflage themselves, hiding their weaknesses, shortcomings, and deficiencies from people so that they only ever see their brilliance. They do not even dare to tell other people when they feel negative; they lack the courage to open up and fellowship with them, and when they do something wrong, they do their utmost to conceal it and cover it up. Never do they mention the harm they have caused to the work of the church in the course of doing their duty. When they have made some minor contribution or achieved some small success, however, they are quick to show it off. They cannot wait

to let the whole world know how capable they are, how high their caliber is, how exceptional they are, and how much better they are than normal people. Is this not a way of exalting and testifying to themselves?” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Four: They Exalt and Testify About Themselves). Hadn't I shown off and exalted myself just like God described? In performing my duty, I was showing off to gain the admiration of others instead of bearing witness to and exalting God. I was using my gospel experience like personal capital, thinking I was smart and eloquent. I showed off and thrust myself into the spotlight at every opportunity. When I had some successes in sharing the gospel, I boasted to Zhengxin about my ability to fellowship about the truth and solve problems, and when I saw her face some failures, I told her all about my experiences. I was acting under the guise of helping her out, but in fact it was just to flaunt myself and make a display of my abilities. I wanted her to think I was better than her, and as a result, she ended up feeling inferior to me and descending into negativity. When the leader came to our gathering, I was grandstanding and showing off the whole time, exaggerating about how difficult the problems I'd resolved were to highlight my abilities. I also interrupted people and turned the gathering into my own personal lecture session, going on and on about how I had achieved results in sharing the gospel to highlight my accomplishments and win the admiration of others. I was really despicable and shameless! Because I was always interrupting and showing off, I deprived my brothers and sisters of the opportunity to seek and fellowship the truth. As a result, their issues and hardships were not promptly resolved. I had completely disrupted the gathering. What's more, because I only cared about showing myself off, I didn't put any effort into pondering God's words and listening to other people's experiences and knowledge. As a result, I didn't get anything out of the gathering either. I knew I had plenty

of faults and failures, but I was afraid of damaging the image others held of me, so I covered up those shortcomings and failings, only talking about my successes. As a result, some brothers and sisters came to admire and rely on me. I was bringing them before myself, and not only was I not afraid, but I reveled in it. Reflecting on my behavior, I realized that I didn't try to do my duty well and satisfy God, but was only deceiving and ensnaring people.

Later, I read this passage of God's words that helped me understand my nature and essence. God's words say: **"Some people particularly idolize Paul. They like to go out and give speeches and do work, they like to attend gatherings and preach, and they like to have people listen to them, worship them, and revolve around them. They like to hold a place in the hearts of others, and they appreciate it when others value the image they present. Let us analyze their nature from these behaviors. What is their nature? If they really behave like this, then it is sufficient in showing that they are arrogant and conceited. They do not worship God at all; they seek higher status and wish to have authority over others, to possess them, and to hold a position in their hearts. This is the classic image of Satan. The aspects of their nature that stand out are arrogance and conceit, an unwillingness to worship God, and a desire to be worshiped by others. Such behaviors can give you a very clear view into their nature"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). This made me realize that constant bragging is the result of being controlled by an arrogant nature. I'd loved the feeling of being admired and supported since I was little—there was such a sense of prestige and enjoyment—so that was something I always pursued in life. I kept doing that even after gaining faith, boasting and showing off whenever I had the chance. I reveled in it and was delighted whenever I saw someone's look of admiration. Spreading the gospel was

my responsibility, my duty, and any successes were thanks to God's guidance. But I was controlled by my arrogant nature, using gifts, experience, and the few results I had in spreading the gospel as personal capital. I felt like I was an indispensable talent, and I was dismissive of everyone else. I was also seizing every chance to boast in front of my brothers and sisters, how I'd been successful in sharing the gospel, but never mentioning my shortcomings or failures. As a result, my brothers and sisters started relying on me instead of looking to and relying upon God. God should hold a sacred place in people's hearts, but I was bringing others before myself, so there was only room for me in their hearts. Wasn't I resisting God? I thought of Paul in the Age of Grace, who was so arrogant. He never exalted or testified to the Lord Jesus Christ in his epistles, and he didn't bear witness to what the Lord Jesus' work did for mankind. He was just boasting about his gifts and caliber, ensnaring others so they'd admire and follow him. He testified that he wasn't inferior to any other apostle, and ultimately said he lived as Christ, which seriously offended God's disposition. Paul's constant exaltation of himself made other people adulate him, to the point that for 2,000 years believers have treated his words like God's own words, as the basis for their faith, and the principles to put into practice. His words surpass God's own words to them, making God just a figurehead. Paul ended up becoming the primary antichrist and was punished by God. Was I not just like Paul? I wasn't exalting and testifying to God in my duty, but was just showing off and ensnaring people's hearts. How was I performing my duty? I was simply running my own enterprise. At that point, I became horrified by my actions and realized that continuing in this way would be truly dangerous. I came before God and prayed, "God, I don't want to live against You, within my corrupt disposition. Please discipline and chasten me if I show off again. God, please guide me to gain

a deeper understanding of myself.” Later I came across another passage of God’s words in which He judges and exposes mankind: **“Do not think that you understand everything. I tell you that all you have seen and experienced is insufficient for you to understand even a thousandth of My management plan. So why then do you act so haughty? That little bit of talent and tiny bit of knowledge you have are insufficient for Jesus to use in even a single second of His work! How much experience do you actually possess? What you have seen and all that you have heard in your lifetime and what you have imagined are less than the work I do in a single moment! You had best not nitpick and find fault. You can be as arrogant as you want, but you are nothing more than a creature not even the equal of an ant! All that you hold within your belly is less than what is in an ant’s belly! Do not think, just because you have gained some experience and seniority, that this entitles you to gesticulate wildly and talk big. Are not your experience and your seniority the product of the words I have uttered? Do you believe that they were in exchange for your own labor and toil? Today, you see that I have become flesh, and on this account alone there is in you a glut of concepts, and no end of notions therefrom. If not for My incarnation, even if you were possessed of extraordinary talents, you would not have so many concepts; and is it not from these that your notions arise?”** (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Two Incarnations Complete the Significance of the Incarnation). I didn’t have the truth reality and was only able to speak words and doctrines. After gaining just a little experience and doing a bit of work, I promptly disregarded everyone else, even God. I was stealing God’s glory, was unreasonably arrogant and lacking even a modicum of rationality! While sharing the gospel, I was actually keenly aware that it was God upholding His own work. Sometimes someone would ask a question I

didn't know how to answer, so I'd pray to God and lean on Him. Then the answer would come to me and I'd know how to address the problem through the Holy Spirit's enlightenment. Sometimes I wouldn't even say that much, just a passage of God's words, but people would be moved, recognize God's voice, and be ready to seek and accept His last days' work. This was all achieved by God's words; it was He that was moving people's hearts. Once, I shared the gospel with the brother of a sister in the church. Quite a few people had fellowshiped with him before, but he was constrained by his notions and wasn't willing to seek and investigate. I didn't feel too confident, but I just prepared a bit based on my previous experience. When I talked to him about what I'd already thought through, he not only had no positive reaction, but brought up some notions he had. I didn't know how to fellowship, so I prayed, asking God to move and enlighten him. I just showed him a testimony video and didn't fellowship much with him, but he was really moved by the fellowship in the video and wanted to look into God's new work. I was so surprised: He'd made a complete turnaround in just a little over 30 minutes. I knew it wasn't because I'd fellowshiped so well, but because God had moved him. When my motives were wrong in my duty, no matter how much I talked, no one wanted to accept the gospel. My experience showed me that in my duties, God's words and the work of the Holy Spirit played the decisive role, my talents and caliber were not the defining factor. God's sheep hear His voice. Those God has preselected recognize His voice in His words and want to investigate the true way. If it's not someone God has selected, no amount of fellowship will make any difference. Even without any talent or good caliber, if someone's heart is in the right place, and they truly look to and rely on God, they can gain His guidance, and they will be successful in their duties all the same. Yet I was blind to this fact, didn't have the slightest

recognition of the Holy Spirit's work, and didn't have a God-fearing heart. I gave myself all the glory for the slightest achievement, using that as an excuse to boast. I really was shameless. Thinking back on the ways I'd been showing off, I felt so vile and ashamed. I really was a buffoon, blindly putting on a show and exposing my wretched state to all without the least bit of self-awareness. If I hadn't run into the roadblocks while spreading the gospel, and if my sister hadn't dealt with and pruned me, I'd have remained numb, without any self-knowledge. At this realization, I prayed to God, wanting to repent, to stop exalting myself and showing off.

Later, I consciously sought how I should practice in order to exalt and bear witness to God. I read a passage of God's words that said: **"When bearing testimony for God, you should mainly talk about how God judges and chastises people, and what trials He uses to refine people and change their dispositions. You should also talk about how much corruption has been revealed in your experience, how much you have suffered, how many things you did to resist God, and how you were eventually conquered by God. Talk about how much real knowledge of God's work you have, and how you should bear witness for God and repay Him for His love. You should put substance into this kind of language, while putting it in a simple manner. Do not talk about empty theories. Speak more down-to-earth; speak from the heart. This is how you should experience things. Do not equip yourselves with profound-seeming, empty theories in an effort to show off; doing so makes you appear quite arrogant and senseless. You should speak more about real things from your actual experience, and speak more from the heart; this is most beneficial to others, and most appropriate for them to see"**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). God's words showed me that the way to exalt

and bear witness to God is by testifying to His work and His disposition, talking about our own corruption and rebelliousness and how we've learned about ourselves through the judgment and chastisement of His words. Then others can come to see God's righteous disposition as well as His love and salvation of us. But I'd just been talking about my successes in sharing the gospel, hardly ever talking about corruption I'd shown or how I'd resisted and rebelled against God. As a result, people began to admire me and rely upon me. I needed to show my true self, reveal how I'd been exalting myself and showing off and how God had chastened and disciplined me to guide me to know myself. I should also lay bare my struggles and deficiencies in preaching the gospel, and share how the Holy Spirit guided me. I needed to fellowship all of that, so that the others could see me clearly and also see how God works. Then they'd have the faith to rely on and look to God in their duty and gain His guidance. When I opened up that way, everyone realized they really didn't have God in their hearts. They wanted to make a change, to lean on God in their duty.

I read this in God's words after that: **"God is the Creator, and His identity and status are supreme. God possesses authority, wisdom, and power, and He has His own disposition and His possessions and being. Does anyone know how many years God has been working in the midst of humanity and all creation? The specific number of years for which God has been working and managing all of humanity is unknown; no one can give a precise figure, and God doesn't report these matters to humanity. However, if Satan were to do something like this, would it report it? It certainly would. It wants to show itself off to mislead more people and make more people aware of its contributions. Why doesn't God report these matters? There is a humble and hidden aspect to God's essence. What is the opposite of being humble and hidden? It's**

being arrogant and displaying oneself. ... God demands that people bear testimony to Him, but has He borne testimony to Himself? (No.) On the other hand, Satan is afraid that people won't know about even the smallest thing it does. The antichrists are no different: They boast about every little thing they do in front of everyone. Hearing them, it seems like they are testifying to God—but if you listen closely you'll discover that they're not testifying to God, but showing off, building themselves up. The intention and essence behind what they say is to vie with God for His chosen ones, and for status. God is humble and hidden, and Satan flaunts itself. Is there a difference? Showing off versus humility and hiddenness: which are positive things? (Humility and hiddenness.) Could Satan be described as humble? (No.) Why? Judging by its wicked nature essence, it is a worthless piece of trash; it would be abnormal for Satan to not flaunt itself. How could Satan be called 'humble'? 'Humility' is said of God. God's identity, essence, and disposition are lofty and honorable, but He never shows off. God is humble and hidden, so people do not see what He has done, but as He works in such obscurity, humankind is unceasingly provided for, nourished, and guided—and this is all arranged by God. Is it not hiddenness and humility, that God never declares these things, never mentions them? God is humble precisely because He is able to do these things but never mentions or declares them, and does not argue about them with people. What right have you to speak of humility when you are incapable of such things? You didn't do any of those things, yet insist on taking credit for them—this is called being shameless. Guiding mankind, God carries out such great work, and He presides over the entire universe. His authority and power are so vast, yet He has never said, 'My power is extraordinary.' He remains hidden among all things,

presiding over everything, nourishing and providing for humankind, allowing all humankind to continue for generation after generation. Take the air and the sunshine, for example, or all the material things necessary for human existence on earth—they all flow forth without cease. That God provides for man is beyond question. If Satan did something good, would it keep it quiet, and remain an unsung hero? Never. It's like how there are some antichrists in the church who previously undertook dangerous work, who forsook things and endured suffering, who may have even gone to prison; there are also some who once contributed to one aspect of the work of the house of God. They never forget these things, they think they deserve lifelong credit for them, they think these are their lifetime's capital—which shows how small people are! People are truly small, and Satan is shameless" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part Two)). I was moved by God's humility and hiddenness. When I compared His demeanor with my own, I became deeply ashamed. God is so supreme, but He still underwent such great suffering and humiliation in becoming flesh and coming to earth, expressing truths to save mankind. No matter how great His work or how many truths He expresses, He never boasts. He just silently supplies and saves mankind. God's essence is incredibly beautiful. But I'm just a speck of dust and have been deeply corrupted by Satan. I'm nothing special and yet I was dying for admiration. I bragged about any little thing I did, worrying that others wouldn't notice. Though clearly this was all work of God's doing and I just cooperated a little, I still shamelessly sought to steal God's glory, constantly showing myself off. The more I thought about it the more lowly and despicable I felt—it was so disgusting to God. I didn't want to be that kind of person anymore.

In gatherings after that, I intentionally exalted and bore witness to God, talking about my corruption and rebelliousness, which despicable intentions had led to my failures, and about how God had disciplined and guided me to understand principles and gain a path of practice. This allowed the brothers and sisters to learn from my failures and recognize God's righteous disposition and salvation. At times, I still have a bit of a desire to show off, but after I realize that, I pray and forsake myself right away. I've felt so much better after putting that into practice. It was thanks to God's love and salvation that I could have this transformation.

69. Why Won't I Shoulder a Burden?

By Daisy, South Korea

In October of 2021, I was practicing as a video work supervisor. I was partnered with Brother Leo and Sister Claire. They'd both been doing this duty for longer than me and had much more experience, and they took the lead in following up on and attending to a lot of the work. I'd also only just begun to practice and there were many aspects of the work that I didn't understand, so naturally, I only took on a small role. I felt that so long as there weren't any problems with my work, things would be fine and the others could step in and resolve everything else. That way, I could worry less and I wouldn't be held accountable by anyone. Gradually, I shouldered less and less of a burden and I ended up understanding and participating in very little of the other two's work. Whenever we'd discuss work I wouldn't express any opinions, and in my spare time I'd take it easy and watch secular videos. I felt like doing my duty like this was just fine.

One day, around noon, a leader suddenly came to me and told me that Leo and Claire were going elsewhere to do their duty, and that I'd have to bear more responsibility, put in more effort, and take over the video work. This sudden change left me momentarily dumbstruck. I'd not been in this duty for long, and there was so much work to be followed up on, wasn't this a lot of pressure? The work they were responsible for was pretty complicated and required constant attention. It would require me to seek out materials to guide those who were lacking in skills. Leo and Claire were pretty skilled and were normally very busy. Since I'd just started, surely I'd need to put in even more time. Would I ever have any down time again? If I couldn't shoulder this responsibility and delayed the work, wouldn't I commit a transgression? I thought it'd be better for the leader to find

somebody more suitable for this responsibility. Seeing that I wasn't saying anything, the leader asked what was on my mind. I felt very resistant and didn't want to say anything. After we'd finished discussing work, I just left. When I thought about all the problems and hardships I'd have to shoulder all by myself, I felt suffocated by the pressure and that the days ahead of me would be unbearable. No matter how I looked at it, I still didn't feel up to this job. The leader then sent me a message asking about my state, to which I quickly replied: "I don't feel up to taking on this work. Maybe you can find somebody more suitable?" The leader then asked me: "On what basis do you judge yourself to be unsuitable?" I really didn't know how to respond to this question. I hadn't even tried yet, and didn't know if I was up to the task. But thinking about the pressure of the work and the physical toll it would take had made me want to refuse. Was this not shirking responsibility and refusing my duty? Then I thought about how all the things I faced each day were permitted by God and that I should submit. So I prayed to God: "God, my two partners are being transferred and I'm being left to take on all the work by myself. I feel resistant and unwilling to submit. I know that this kind of state is incorrect, but I don't understand Your will. Please enlighten and guide me, so that I may know myself and submit."

Later on, a sister sent me a passage of God's word that really spoke to my state. God says: **"What are the manifestations of an honest person? Firstly, having no doubts about God's words. That is one of the manifestations of an honest person. Apart from this, the most important manifestation is seeking and practicing the truth in all matters—this is most crucial. You say that you are honest, but you always push God's words to the back of your mind and just do whatever you want. Is that the manifestation of an honest person? You**

say, 'Although my caliber is poor, I have an honest heart.' And yet when a duty falls to you, you are afraid of suffering and bearing responsibility if you do not do it well, so you make excuses to shirk your duty or suggest that someone else do it. Is this the manifestation of an honest person? Clearly, it is not. How, then, should an honest person behave? They should submit to God's arrangements, be devoted to the duty they are supposed to perform, and strive to satisfy God's will. This manifests itself in several ways: One is accepting your duty with an honest heart, not considering your fleshly interests, not being half-hearted about it, and not plotting for your own benefit. Those are manifestations of honesty. Another is putting all your heart and strength into performing your duty well, doing things properly, and putting your heart and love into your duty to satisfy God. These are the manifestations an honest person should have while performing their duty. If you do not carry out what you know and understand, and if you only put in 50 or 60 percent of your effort, then you are not putting all your heart and strength into it. Rather, you are sly and slacking off. Are people who perform their duties in this way honest? Absolutely not. God has no use for such slippery and deceitful people; they must be cast out. God only uses honest people to perform duties. Even devoted service-doers must be honest. People who are perennially careless, perfunctory, sly and looking for ways to slack off are all deceitful, and are all demons. None of them truly believe in God, and they shall all be cast out. Some people think, 'Being an honest person is just about telling the truth and not telling lies. It's easy to be an honest person, really.' What do you think of this sentiment? Is being an honest person so limited in scope? Absolutely not. You must reveal your heart and give it to God; this is the attitude an honest person ought to have.

That is why an honest heart is very precious. What does this imply? That an honest heart can control your behavior and change your state. It can lead you to make the right choices, and to submit to God and gain His approval. A heart like this is truly precious. If you have an honest heart like this, then that is the state you should live in, that is how you should behave, and that is how you should give of yourself"

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's word made me feel so ashamed. When faced with their duty, honest people are not concerned about the risk that undertaking their duty might entail, much less do they shirk or refuse their duty because they fear suffering. Rather, they start by accepting and putting their all into it. Only this is an honest attitude. Then I thought about my attitude toward my duty. As soon as I heard my two partners were transferring, I worried about my workload increasing, my worries multiplying, and the pressure on me growing. If the work wasn't done well, I'd have to take responsibility for it, and so I tried to use the excuse of being unqualified to shirk my responsibility. I was truly deceitful and lacking in conscience. I thought about how in prayer, I always pledged to heed God's burdens, but when it actually came down to it, I heeded my flesh instead, didn't practice any of the truths, and just used empty words to deceive God. If I really heeded God's will, knew that I wasn't up to the work, and couldn't find anyone else suitable, then I should have intensified the honing of my skills and cooperated with the others to prevent the video work being impacted. This is what a person with conscience and humanity should do. If in the end I really weren't up to the task and ended up getting transferred or dismissed, then I would just submit to God's arrangements. Only this way of practicing is rational. I felt a little calmer at this thought.

Later, I read a passage of God's word which gave me some understanding of the attitude I'd had toward my duty. God says: "**All who**

do not pursue the truth perform their duties with a mindset lacking in responsibility. 'If someone leads, I follow; wherever they lead, I go. I'll do whatever they'd have me do. As for taking on responsibility and concern, or taking more trouble to do something, doing something with all my heart and strength—I'm not up for that.' These people are unwilling to pay the price. They are only willing to exert themselves, not to take on responsibility. This is not the attitude with which one truly performs a duty. One must learn to put their heart into their performance of their duty, and a person with a conscience can accomplish this. If one never puts their heart into the performance of their duty, that means they have no conscience, and those without a conscience cannot gain the truth. Why do I say they cannot gain the truth? They do not know how to pray to God and seek the Holy Spirit's enlightenment, nor how to show consideration for God's will, nor how to put their heart into contemplating God's words, nor do they know how to seek the truth, how to seek to understand God's requirements and His will. This is what it is to not be able to seek the truth. Do you experience states where, no matter what happens, or what sort of duty you perform, you are able to frequently quiet yourself before God, and to put your heart into contemplating His words, and into seeking the truth, and into considering how you must perform that duty to accord with God's will, and which truths you should possess in order to perform that duty satisfactorily? Are there many times in which you seek the truth in this way? (No.) Putting your heart into your duty and being able to take on responsibility require you to suffer and to pay a price—it is not enough simply to talk about these things. If you do not put your heart into your duty, always wanting to labor instead, then your duty will certainly not be done well. You will simply go through

the motions and nothing more, and you will not know whether you have done your duty well or not. If you put your heart into it, you will gradually come to understand the truth; if you do not, then you will not. When you put your heart into performing your duty and pursuing the truth, you will gradually come to understand God's will, to discover your own corruption and deficiencies, and to master all your various states. When your only focus is on exerting effort, and you do not put your heart into reflecting on yourself, you will be unable to discover the true states in your heart and the myriad reactions and the revelations of corruption that you have in different environments. If you do not know what the consequences will be when problems go unresolved, then you're in a lot of trouble. This is why it's no good to believe in God in a confused way. You must live before God at all times, in all places; whatever befalls you, you must always seek the truth, and while you do, you must also reflect on yourself and know what problems there are in your state, seeking the truth at once to resolve them. Only thus can you perform your duty well and avoid delaying the work. Not only will you be able to perform your duty well, what's most important is that you will also have life entry and be able to resolve your corrupt dispositions. Only thus can you enter the truth reality. If what you often ponder in your heart is not matters related to your duty, or matters that have to do with the truth, and instead, you are entangled in external things, with your thoughts on affairs of the flesh, will you be able to understand the truth? Will you be able to perform your duty well and live before God? Certainly not. A person like that cannot be saved" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). God was really painting a picture of me in His exposure of this type of attitude. When I started on this duty, I didn't take

on any responsibility. I saw that my partners had more experience than me, so I just slipped into the background, and I felt things were fine so long as I could ensure nothing went wrong with my own work. If I did this, then I'd look respectable and not have to tire myself out, so I just focused on my own work and never concerned myself with the work they were responsible for, nor did I take seriously the problems or difficulties that arose in it. When the leader asked why the work of our group was so inefficient, I didn't have an answer. This kind of attitude is the same way unbelievers treat their jobs. In what way was I heeding God's will in my duty? When problems came up in work, I wouldn't seek the truth or summarize the deviations, nor would I consider how to increase efficiency. I always felt that so long as my fellow workers could take them on, I could relax a little. Whenever I'd have time, I'd indulge my flesh or watch secular videos. I became more and more dissolute and grew ever further from God. I saw that I had no diligence in my duty. I was just treating it like a job. How could I perform my duty well like this? At this point I finally realized that God's arrangements had caused my "fallbacks" to leave to give me a chance to practice, to learn to feel concern, to actively shoulder responsibility, to rely on God in difficulties, and seek the truth principles. More importantly, this allowed me to recognize that my slack and irresponsible attitude toward my duty was incurring God's disgust. The pressures of the work would now compel me to be more diligent in my duty and to work toward adequately performing my duty. Having understood God's intentions, I was willing to submit to these circumstances. Over the next few days, I consciously took greater pains in my work. Once I discovered issues in the video work, I noted them down and sought to resolve them. I made a study plan and strove to take over the work as soon

as possible. Once my state had been adjusted, I had more time for my work, and I spent my days feeling more at peace.

Later, I was partnered up with another sister. To begin with, I was still mindful of being more responsible, but after a while, I found that she was pretty skilled and that she had more professional expertise than I did, so I handed some tasks over to her and then did not involve myself any further. Sometimes, to keep up my reputation, I'd participate in discussions but refrain from making suggestions, thinking: "Seeing as you can handle things, there's no need for me to worry and I can take it easy for a while." My leader cautioned me to show greater concern for the work, and for a few days after she said this, I did, but before long, I was back to my old ways. Sometimes brothers and sisters would send us messages about tricky issues that had emerged in the work that needed to be resolved right away, but as soon as I'd see it was work my sister was mainly following up on, I wouldn't want to bother. I'd deliberately mark the message as unread and pretend not to have seen it, thinking my sister could handle it later. Though I felt this was irresponsible, since the work progress was normal, I didn't spare it much thought. A few months later, we became responsible for separate parts of the video work. This time, I was without a helper and I knew that I was certain to face many difficulties and problems. But when I thought about my lack of responsibility in my duty, and about how this could be good for me, I told myself that I should start by submitting. But when I actually started, I found that I suddenly had a lot more to follow up on, and the number of things I had to handle each day felt endless. On top of that, my professional skills were not great and more and more problems kept revealing themselves. Every video we made received suggestions and I had to put thought into responding to each one. Gradually, the little enthusiasm I had had was all used up, and I'd often wonder to myself, "I'm

already trying so hard but there are still so many issues, maybe it'd be better if the leader found somebody more suitable.” Shortly after, a number of our videos got sent back to be redone in a row and I felt even more depressed. I no longer wanted to resolve the tricky issues I was faced with and I yearned all the more for those days when I was partnered with others in my duty, when I could just blithely hide behind them, and didn't have to take on so much pressure. I'd felt no drive to do my duty, when I walked my legs felt heavy. It was then I realized that I couldn't keep doing my duty in this state, so I prayed to God. Through seeking, I suddenly remembered Noah. He encountered many difficulties and failures as he built the ark, but he never gave up, and kept going for 120 years, eventually finishing the ark and completing God's commission. But in the face of my few difficulties, I wanted to offload my burden and head for the hills. Wasn't I just being a coward? At this thought, I pulled myself together somewhat and was able to face my work problems properly.

During my devotionals, I read this passage of God's word: **“All false leaders never do practical work, and they act like their leadership role is some official post, thoroughly enjoying the perks of their status. The duty that ought to be performed and work that ought to be done by a leader they treat as an encumbrance, as a bother. In their hearts, they brim with defiance toward the work of the church: If you have them keep an eye on the work or find out issues that exist within it that need to be followed up on and resolved, they are full of reluctance. This is the work that leaders and workers are supposed to do, this is their job. If you don't do it—if you are unwilling to do it—why do you still want to be a leader or worker? Do you perform your duty in order to be mindful of God's will, or in order to be an official and enjoy the trappings of status? Is it not shameless to be a leader if you just wish to**

hold some official position? No one is of lower character—these people have no self-respect, they are without shame. If you wish to enjoy fleshly ease, hurry back to the world and strive for it, grab it, and snatch it as you are able. No one will interfere. God's house is a place for God's chosen people to perform their duties and worship Him; it is a place for people to pursue the truth and to be saved. It is not some place for anyone to relish in fleshly ease, much less a place that coddles people. ... No matter what work some people do or what duty they perform, they are incapable of succeeding at it, it is too much for them, they are incapable of fulfilling any of the obligations or responsibilities that people ought to. Are they not trash? Are they still worthy of being called people? With the exception of simpletons, the mentally handicapped, and those who suffer from physical impairments, is there anyone alive who ought not to perform their duties and fulfill their responsibilities? But this kind of person is always conniving and playing dirty, and does not wish to fulfill their responsibilities; the implication is that they do not wish to conduct themselves like a proper person. God gave them caliber and gifts, He gave them the opportunity to be a human being, yet they cannot use these in performing their duty. They do nothing, but wish to enjoy everything. Is such a person fit to be called a human being? No matter what work is given to them—whether it be important or ordinary, difficult or simple—they are always careless and perfunctory, always lazy and slippery. When problems arise, they try to push responsibility for them onto other people; they take no responsibility, wishing to keep living their parasitic lives. Are they not useless trash? In society, who does not have to depend on themselves for survival? Once a person is grown, they must provide for themselves. Their parents have fulfilled their

responsibility. Even if their parents were willing to support them, they would be uneasy with it, and ought to be able to recognize, ‘My parents have finished their job of raising children. I’m an adult, and I’m able-bodied—I should be able to live independently.’ Is this not the minimum sense that an adult ought to have? If someone truly has sense, they could not continue mooching off their parents; they would be afraid of others’ laughter, of being shamed. So, does an idle loafer have sense? (No.) They always want something for nothing, they never want to take responsibility, they are looking for a free lunch, they want three square meals a day—and for someone to wait on them, and for the food to be delicious—without doing any work. Is this not the mindset of a parasite? And do people who are parasites have conscience and sense? Do they have dignity and integrity? Absolutely not; they are all freeloading good-for-nothings, all beasts without conscience or reason. None of them are fit to remain in God’s house”

(The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (8)). God’s word compelled me to reflect: Monitoring and understanding the problems in the work, and seeking the truth to resolve them is the job of a leader and worker, but false leaders see this as an encumbrance. This shows that they are not here to perform their duty, but rather to enjoy the trappings of officialdom. I saw that my behavior was also like this. I should have taken responsibility for and resolved the problems and difficulties that emerged, I should have taken this opportunity to seek the truth and make up for my own shortcomings, which would have allowed me to progress faster. But I wanted to refuse my duty because there were too many difficulties. As a supervisor, I didn’t do any real work or resolve any real problems. Was this not just me craving the benefits of status? Looking back on my behavior, though it may have looked like I was

doing work when I had partners, the work was in fact divided among several of us, and I wasn't responsible for all that much. My duty was easy, so I was actually having a really easy time. When my two partners were transferred, the work pressure really piled on, I needed to suffer to shoulder my responsibility, and so I became resistant, even to the point of wanting to betray God and refuse my duty. Later, although I made amends to my state by eating and drinking God's word, when I was partnered with a sister with more experience than me, I took on less responsibility again, and I spent my days performing my duty leisurely, unwilling to worry myself. When I was made solely responsible for video work this time and the difficulties mounted, I wanted to run again. I saw that my attitude toward my duty had been so treacherous and that I was ready to excuse myself at the first sign of physical hardship or responsibility. I'd always wanted to switch into an easy and stress-free job, but the truth is, all jobs have some difficulties, and if I didn't resolve my corrupt disposition, I wouldn't be able to do any duty properly. I saw that I was sick of the truth by nature and that I didn't love positive things. I wasn't there to fulfill a duty, but rather to enjoy blessings. In the end, nothing comes of this kind of faith! In particular, I read in God's word: **"They always want something for nothing, they never want to take responsibility, they are looking for a free lunch, they want three square meals a day—and for someone to wait on them, and for the food to be delicious—without doing any work. Is this not the mindset of a parasite?"** I was exactly the type of person God was revealing, I only wanted to reap but never sow, and to enjoy the fruits of others' labor. Wasn't I just trash then? The more I thought, the more nauseating I found myself. In the past, the people I had hated the most were those freeloaders who still mooch off their parents, fully grown adults who don't leave the house, who take advantage of their parents, and take on no responsibilities.

They are good-for-nothings. But how was my current behavior any different from theirs? In my self-reproachment, I prayed to God: “Oh God, I finally see that I am truly selfish and insincere in my duty. I have only ever thought about my own flesh and wanted to be a parasite. I am truly terrified by these depraved thoughts. There is so much work in the church that needs urgent cooperation, but I’m not trying to make progress or to take on any burdens. I’m trash.”

I went on to do some thinking. Why was it that I always wanted to flee and refuse my duty whenever the pressure and difficulties mounted in my work? What exactly was the root cause of this? In my seeking, I read the words of God: **“Today, you do not believe the words I say, and you pay no attention to them; when the day comes for this work to spread and you see the entirety of it, you will regret, and at that time you will be dumbfounded. There are blessings, yet you do not know to enjoy them, and there is the truth, yet you do not pursue it. Do you not bring contempt upon yourself? Today, although the next step of God’s work has yet to begin, there is nothing exceptional about the demands that are made of you and what you are asked to live out. There is so much work, and so many truths; are they not worthy of being known by you? Is God’s chastisement and judgment incapable of awakening your spirit? Is God’s chastisement and judgment incapable of making you hate yourself? Are you content to live under the influence of Satan, with peace and joy, and a little fleshly comfort? Are you not the lowliest of all people? None are more foolish than those who have beheld salvation but do not pursue to gain it; these are people who gorge themselves on the flesh and enjoy Satan. You hope that your faith in God will not entail any challenges or tribulations, or the slightest hardship. You always pursue those things that are worthless, and you**

attach no value to life, instead putting your own extravagant thoughts before the truth. You are so worthless! You live like a pig—what difference is there between you, and pigs and dogs? Are those who do not pursue the truth, and instead love the flesh, not all beasts? Are those dead ones without spirits not all walking corpses? How many words have been spoken among you? Has only a little work been done among you? How much have I provided among you? So why have you not gained it? What do you have to complain of? Is it not the case that you have gained nothing because you are too in love with the flesh? And is it not because your thoughts are too extravagant? Is it not because you are too stupid? If you are incapable of gaining these blessings, can you blame God for not saving you? What you pursue is to be able to gain peace after believing in God, for your children to be free from illness, for your husband to have a good job, for your son to find a good wife, for your daughter to find a decent husband, for your oxen and horses to plow the land well, for a year of good weather for your crops. This is what you seek. Your pursuit is only to live in comfort, for no accidents to befall your family, for the winds to pass you by, for your face to be untouched by grit, for your family's crops to not be flooded, for you to be unaffected by any disaster, to live in God's embrace, to live in a cozy nest. A coward such as you, who always pursues the flesh—do you have a heart, do you have a spirit? Are you not a beast? I give you the true way without asking for anything in return, yet you do not pursue. Are you one of those who believe in God? I bestow real human life upon you, yet you do not pursue. Are you no different from a pig or a dog? Pigs do not pursue the life of man, they do not pursue being cleansed, and they do not understand what life is. Each day, after eating their fill, they simply sleep. I have

given you the true way, yet you have not gained it: You are empty-handed. Are you willing to continue in this life, the life of a pig? What is the significance of such people being alive? Your life is contemptible and ignoble, you live amid filth and licentiousness, and you do not pursue any goals; is your life not the most ignoble of all? Do you have the gall to look upon God? If you continue to experience in this way, will you not acquire nothing? The true way has been given to you, but whether or not you can ultimately gain it depends on your own personal pursuit” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of

Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). From the stern words of God, I felt that God holds the utmost disgust and antipathy for people who crave comfort, that to Him, they are just animals. They are idle loafers, unwilling to work to make progress, fond of idling about, and ultimately, they perform no duty properly and gain no truth. They are trash. This was how I was. I liked my duty to go smoothly, and so long as I had a duty and I didn't get dismissed or cast out, things were fine. But as soon as I was faced with difficulties that required me to suffer or pay a price, I'd shrink back. I just wanted to pick jobs that were simple and straightforward, and I upheld the satanic life principles of "Enjoy life whilst you're alive" and "Treat yourself well." Because of the dominance of these thoughts and views, I always craved comfort and was annoyed whenever the work I was responsible for piled up, worrying that it would cut into my leisure time. When I needed to learn some more skills, I didn't really pay a price for it. As a result, after a while, I hadn't made much progress on my skills and couldn't handle the work. I even sometimes neglected my duties and watched secular videos under the pretense of learning skills, becoming ever number and darker in spirit. As a supervisor, when problems appeared in the work, I should have actively followed up and resolved them, but as soon as I saw the problems

were a little tricky, I just used some tricks to ignore them, delaying the progress of the work. Even more serious was my constant will to find somebody to take my place and relieve the pressure on me. I knew that making videos was very important, yet I'd satisfy my flesh and flee at every crucial moment, not taking on any responsibility. I was just like a child whose parents had raised them to adulthood, but when the time comes to sacrifice for their family, they fear suffering and are unwilling to take on responsibility. This kind of person has no conscience and is a thankless wretch. I thought about how my behavior had been just like this. God had guided me to this point and had also graced me, allowing me to perform such an important duty, yet I always feared suffering and only heeded my flesh. I had no conscience whatsoever! I always complained about the hardships of my duty and loathed to part with my physical comforts. Not only was I losing my chance to gain the truth, but I was also making a mess of my duty and leaving nothing behind me but transgressions. Eventually, I was certain to be rejected and cast out by God!

I started seeking a path of practice. I read the words of God: **“Suppose the church gives you a job to do, and you say, ‘Whether the job is a chance to stand out or not—since it’s been given to me, I’ll do it well. I will take on this responsibility. If I’m assigned to reception, I’ll give my all to receiving people well; I’ll look after the brothers and sisters well, and do my best to maintain everyone’s safety. If I’m assigned to spread the gospel, I’ll equip myself with the truth and lovingly spread the gospel and perform my duty well. If I’m assigned to learn a foreign language, I’ll study it diligently and work hard at it, and learn it well as quickly as possible, within a year or two, so that I can testify of God to foreigners. If I’m asked to write testimony articles, I’ll conscientiously train myself to do so and view things according to the truth principles;**

I'll learn about language, and though I may not be able to write articles with beautiful prose, I'll at least be able to clearly communicate my experiential testimony, to fellowship comprehensibly about the truth, and to give true testimony for God, such that when people read my articles, they're edified and benefited. Whatever job the church assigns me, I'll take it up with all my heart and strength. If there's something I don't understand or a problem comes up, I'll pray to God, seek the truth, resolve problems according to the truth principles, and do the thing well. Whatever my duty, I'll use everything I have to perform it well and satisfy God. For whatever I can achieve, I will do my best to take on all the responsibility that is mine to bear, and at the least, I will not go against my conscience and reason, or be careless and perfunctory, or be wily and truant, or enjoy the fruits of others' labor. Nothing I do will be beneath the standards of conscience.' This is the minimum standard of human comportment, and one who performs their duty in such a way may qualify as a conscientious, reasonable person. You must at least be clear of conscience in performing your duty, and you must feel at least that you earn your three meals a day and are not scrounging for them. This is called a sense of responsibility. Whether your caliber is high or low, and whether or not you understand the truth, you must have this attitude: 'Since this work was given me to do, I must treat it seriously; I must make it my concern and do it well, with all my heart and strength. As for whether I can do it perfectly well, I can't presume to offer a guarantee, but my attitude is that I'll do my best to see it done well, and I certainly won't be careless and perfunctory about it. If a problem arises in work, I should take responsibility then, and ensure I draw a lesson from it and perform my duty well.' This is the right attitude. Do you have such an attitude?"

(The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (8)). God's words really inspired me. Since the church put me in charge of this work, I had to assume all the responsibilities an adult is capable of taking on. No matter how high my caliber, how capable I was at my work, or the number of difficulties I faced in my duty, I couldn't shrink back, I had to press on and put my all into taking on this work. Later, whenever we'd finish making a video and receive others' suggestions, no matter if it was a problem I wasn't aware of or that I didn't know how to handle, I'd always actively seek out a path to solve it or try to find some people with experience that I could consult. Gradually, I became more familiar with these skills and clearer on principles. Before, whenever there'd be a tricky problem, I'd habitually foist it onto one of my partners to handle, not reply promptly to messages in the group chat, and drag my feet. Now, I'm able to actively take on responsibility and shoulder more of a burden in my duty. Though there would be difficulties in the course of our cooperation, when I attentively rely on God, and through discussion with everyone, the path we should take becomes ever clearer.

It was only after this experience that I realized how selfish and deceitful I was, that I was treacherous and lazy in my duty, unwilling to shoulder responsibility. When I fixed my attitude, and was willing to be mindful of God's burden and put my all into cooperating, I saw God's leadership and guidance, I gained faith within me, and I became willing to practice being a rational and conscientious person that attends to their duties.

70. God Appearing and Working in China Is So Significant

By Alisha, South Korea

One day, I watched a hymn video titled **“God Has Brought His Glory to the East,”** which really struck a chord in me. The lyrics read: **“I gave My glory to Israel and then took it away, thereby bringing the Israelites to the East and all of humanity to the East. I have brought them all to the light so that they may be reunited with it, and be in association with it, and no longer have to search for it. I shall let all who are searching see the light again and see the glory I had in Israel; I shall let them see that I have long ago come down upon a white cloud into the midst of mankind, let them see the countless clouds of white and fruits in their abundant clusters, and, what is more, let them see Jehovah God of Israel. I shall let them look upon the Master of the Jews, the longed-for Messiah, and the full appearance of Me who have been persecuted by kings throughout the ages. I shall work upon the entire universe and I shall perform great work, revealing all My glory and all My deeds to man in the last days. I shall show My glorious countenance in its fullness to those who have waited many years for Me, to those who have longed for Me to come upon a white cloud, to Israel that has longed for Me to appear once again, and to all mankind who persecute Me, so that all will know that I have long ago taken away My glory and brought it to the East, and it is no longer in Judea. For the last days have already come!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Seven Thunders Peal—Prophesying That the Gospel of the Kingdom Shall Spread Throughout the Universe). This video really blew me away. God brings His glory from Israel to the East in the last days. In China, the most God-resisting of all nations,

He has appeared, performing His work and expressing the truth to conquer and save all people throughout the universe. This is God's almightiness and wisdom. In the past, I was unfamiliar with God's work. Based on my notions, I thought the Lord would appear in Israel upon His return. It was only after I read Almighty God's words that I came to understand the incredible significance of God's appearance and work in China.

I found faith in the Lord in 1997, and I was an enthusiastic seeker. Whenever I had time I'd volunteer at the church, and I steadfastly gave tithing every month. In April of 2011, I came to South Korea for a job, and no matter how busy I was with work, I would still attend Sunday service. But the pastor's sermons were always just the same old same old. The congregants would either nod off or end up chatting amongst each other. There was no enjoyment or sustenance at all. Over time, I stopped wanting to go to services. But being as I'm a Christian, I just didn't feel right not attending. So I forced myself to keep going.

Then, by chance one day, I happened to meet one of my old church friends. She invited me to her house and her friend Audrey also came along. It was the first time we'd met, but we clicked right away. We chatted about our situations and also about the desolation in the church. Audrey fellowshiped with me about how the church's desolation was mostly because God is doing new work, and the Holy Spirit's work has shifted, and that we must be like the wise virgins, seeking God's appearance and work, and listening for His voice, in order to welcome the Lord and gain the sustenance of the living waters. I found what she said to be very enlightening. Then, Audrey said: "The Lord Jesus has already returned, He has incarnated in flesh as Almighty God, and has appeared to perform His work in China, expressing the truth and doing the work of judgment beginning with God's house to fully purify and save mankind. Almighty

God has begun the Age of Kingdom and ended the Age of Grace. All those that accept His work in the last days are the wise virgins caught up before God's throne; they're receiving the provision of God's word and attending the wedding feast of the Lamb." I was really shocked by what Audrey said and had a hard time believing her: "The Lord has returned? And He has come to China? In the time of the Old and New Testament, God did His work in Israel, and it says in the Bible: **'And His feet shall stand in that day on the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall split in the middle thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south'** (Zechariah 14:4). In the last days, the Lord should arrive in Israel on the Mount of Olives. How could He be in China?" I voiced my confusion to Audrey.

She just smiled and said: "The prophecies of the Lord's return are all mysterious. We can't comprehend their meaning until they have been fulfilled and we see how God has carried out His work—only then can anyone understand what was meant by the prophecies. We shouldn't delimit God's work using the literal meaning of prophecies, based on our notions and imaginings, because we're likely to resist God in so doing. Take the Pharisees, for example. They looked at the prophecy of the Messiah's coming, clinging to its literal meaning, thinking when the Lord came He'd have to be called Messiah. As a result, when the Lord Jesus came and He wasn't called Messiah, they thought it didn't match up with the words of prophecy, and put their all into denying and resisting the Lord Jesus. It didn't matter how authoritative and powerful what the Lord Jesus preached was—they just wouldn't accept it, and ultimately had Him nailed to the cross. They were cursed and punished by God. If we delimit God's work

based on the words of prophecies in the Bible, and don't investigate the facts of God's appearance and work, we're likely to make the same mistake as the Pharisees. In the last days, Almighty God performs the work of judgment starting with the house of God, expressing all truths that purify and save mankind, like a brilliant light appearing in the East. In just over 20 years, Almighty God's work in the last days has spread throughout China, and has now even reached other nations around the world. **The Word Appears in the Flesh**, a collection of Almighty God's words, has been translated into over 20 languages, and published online for people all over the world to seek and investigate. Almighty God's work has spread like lightning, flashing from the East to the West, rocking the entire world and completely fulfilling the Lord Jesus' prophecy: '**As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even to the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be**' (Matthew 24:27). And it has also fulfilled the prophecy in the Book of Malachi 1:11: '**For from the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same My name shall be great among the Gentiles...,** said Jehovah of hosts.'" Hearing this, it suddenly clicked: The Lord has returned in China, not Israel, and the Bible prophesied this long ago.

Next, Audrey read me a passage of Almighty God's words: "**In actuality, God is the Master of all things. He is the God of all creation. He is not only the God of the Israelites, nor of the Jews; He is the God of all creation. The previous two stages of His work took place in Israel, which has created certain notions in people. They believe that Jehovah did His work in Israel, that Jesus Himself carried out His work in Judea, and, furthermore, that He became flesh to work—and whatever the case, this work did not extend beyond Israel. God did not work in Egyptians or Indians; He only worked in the Israelites. Thus do people form various notions, and delineate God's work within a certain scope.**

They say that when God works, He must do so among the chosen people, and in Israel; save for the Israelites, God works upon no others, nor is there any greater scope to His work. They are especially strict when it comes to keeping God incarnate in line, and do not permit Him to move beyond the bounds of Israel. Are these not all just human notions? God made all of the heavens and earth and all things, He made all of creation, so how could He restrict His work to only Israel? If that were the case, what would be the point of Him making all creation? He created the whole world, and He has carried out His six-thousand-year management plan not only in Israel, but upon every person in the universe. ... If God were to act according to human notions, He would only be the God of the Israelites, and would thus be incapable of extending His work to the Gentile nations, for He would only be the God of the Israelites, and not the God of all creation. The prophecies said that Jehovah's name would be magnified among the Gentile nations, that it would spread to the Gentile nations. Why was this prophesied? If God were only the God of the Israelites, then He would only work in Israel. Moreover, He would not spread this work, and He would not make such a prophecy. Since He did make this prophecy, He will surely extend His work among the Gentile nations, among every nation and all lands. Since He said this, He must do it; this is His plan, for He is the Lord who created the heavens and earth and all things, and the God of all creation. Regardless of whether He works among the Israelites, or throughout the whole of Judea, the work He does is the work of the entire universe, and the work of all humanity. The work He does today in the nation of the great red dragon—in a Gentile nation—is still the work of all humanity. Israel could be the base for His work on earth; likewise, China can also be the

base for His work among the Gentile nations. Has He not now fulfilled the prophecy that ‘the name of Jehovah shall be magnified among the Gentile nations’?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Lord of All Creation).

After reading Almighty God’s words, Audrey fellowshiped: “God is the Lord of all creation, He rules over the entire universe and presides over the fates of all men. God is not only the God of the Israelites, but even more so He is the God of all creation. God has the right to perform His work within any nation and amongst any people. But no matter what country He appears and works in, His work is directed at all mankind, and in order to lead them in their development. In the Age of Law, for example, Jehovah God worked in Israel, proclaimed His law and began the Age of Law. Then, using this land as a center, He gradually expanded His work to other lands, so that all nations and peoples would honor His name as great. In the Age of Grace, the Lord Jesus did the work of redemption in Judea. But the Lord Jesus didn’t just redeem Jews, He redeemed all of mankind. Now, two thousand years later, the Lord Jesus’ gospel has spread to every corner of the world. In the last days, Almighty God has come and He appeared and started working in China before expanding it throughout the universe. Now Almighty God’s words and work are like a brilliant light shining out from the East, being spread and testified among many nations of the West. Great multitudes have heard God’s voice in the words of Almighty God, and have come before God’s throne to accept the judgment and purification of His words. We can see that no matter the age, when God decides to appear and work among a people or in a country, He always chooses a place to work first and then, using this place as an example, gradually extends His work to other places to complete His work of saving man. This is the principle behind God’s work. If we go by our notions and imaginings, thinking that

because God worked in Israel in the Age of Law and the Age of Grace, then God must only be the God of Israel, the gospel can only come out of Israel, the people of Israel are God's only real chosen people and the only ones worthy of His blessings, and God won't appear and work in the Gentile nations, wouldn't we then be delimiting God? God said: **'The name of Jehovah shall be magnified among the Gentile nations,'** so how would this then be accomplished and fulfilled? God has become flesh in the last days and does His work in China, a country ruled by atheism, smashing people's notions. He's shown that He doesn't work according to rules, but rather according to His own plan. He has also shown us that He doesn't just save the people of Israel, but also the Gentiles, and that He is not just the God of the Israelites, but the God of all humanity. He is the God of all created beings. Wherever God appears and works, it is always significant, and He always chooses the place which will best serve the purpose of saving man."

Audrey's fellowship made me feel so ashamed. I really didn't understand God. Knowing that God performed His work during the Age of Law and the Age of Grace in Israel, I thought God would only appear and work in Israel. If God performed His work in Israel again in the last days, then I would have delimited Him still further as the God of the Israelites, and that would have been to deny God as the Ruler of all mankind! Where God appears and does His work is always a reflection of His plan and His wisdom. We are unfit to make comments about God's work, much less delimit His work. But I still had some reservations. China is a country run by an atheist government. It is the worst country for denying and resisting God. If God doesn't intend to appear and work in Israel, why doesn't He work in nations like the US or the UK, where Christianity is the main religion? Why does He choose to perform His work in China of all places? I

voiced these questions to Audrey. Audrey said, “Almighty God has spoken clearly about this. Almighty God says: **‘The work of Jehovah was the creation of the world, it was the beginning; this stage of work is the end of work, and it is the conclusion. At the start, God’s work was carried out among the chosen ones of Israel, and it was the dawn of a new epoch in the most holy of all places. The last stage of work is carried out in the most impure of all countries, to judge the world and bring the age to an end. In the first stage, God’s work was done in the brightest of all places, and the last stage is carried out in the darkest of all places, and this darkness will be driven out, the light brought forth, and all the people conquered. When the people of this most impure and darkest of all places have been conquered, and the entire population has acknowledged that there is a God, who is the true God, and every person has been utterly convinced, then this fact will be used to carry out the work of conquest throughout the entire universe. This stage of work is symbolic: Once the work of this age has been finished, the work of six thousand years of management will come to a complete end. Once those in the darkest of all places have been conquered, it goes without saying that it will also be so everywhere else. As such, only the work of conquest in China carries meaningful symbolism. China embodies all forces of darkness, and the people of China represent all those who are of the flesh, of Satan, and of flesh and blood. It is the Chinese people who have been most corrupted by the great red dragon, who have the strongest opposition to God, whose humanity is most base and impure, and so they are the archetype of all corrupt humanity. ... It is in the people of China that corruption, impurity, unrighteousness, opposition, and rebelliousness are manifested most completely and revealed in all their varied forms. On the one hand, they are of poor caliber, and on**

the other, their lives and mindset are backward, and their habits, social environment, family of birth—all are poor and the most backward. Their status, too, is low. The work in this place is symbolic, and after this test work has been carried out in its entirety, God’s subsequent work will be much easier. If this step of work can be completed, then the subsequent work goes without saying. Once this step of work has been accomplished, great success will have been fully achieved, and the work of conquest throughout the entire universe will have come to a complete end. In fact, once the work among you has been successful, this will be equivalent to the success throughout the entire universe. This is the significance of why I have you act as a model and a specimen. Rebelliousness, opposition, impurity, unrighteousness—all are found in these people, and in them is represented all the rebelliousness of mankind. They are really something. Thus, they are held up as the epitome of conquest, and once they have been conquered they will naturally become specimens and models for others’ (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Vision of God’s Work (2)). We can see from God’s words that God chooses the location and target of His work in every stage based upon the needs of His work. It is always with a specific meaning, and always to further the salvation of mankind. For instance, God performed the first two stages of work in Israel because the Israelites were God’s chosen people. They believed in and worshiped God, they had God-fearing hearts and were the least corrupted of all mankind. It was thus easiest for God to create an exemplary group of God-worshipers by working among them. And in this way, God’s work could spread more quickly and smoothly so that all of mankind could learn of God’s existence and work and even more people could come before God and receive His salvation. God’s first two stages of work being done in Israel were truly

symbolic. God selected Israel entirely according to the needs of His work. In the last days, God does the work of judgment and purification. He expresses truth to judge and expose the corruption and unrighteousness of mankind, displaying His righteous, wrathful and unoffendable disposition for all mankind to see. So He has to select the most corrupt, most God-resisting people as an example. Only in so doing can God's work achieve the best result. As everyone knows, of all humanity, the Chinese have been most corrupted by Satan. They are the most backward, impure, lowly, God-denying, and God-resisting race in all of humanity. They are the archetype of all corrupt humanity. By doing the work of judgment in China, and targeting the Chinese people's corrupt disposition, God most thoroughly and incisively reveals mankind and the truth He expresses is the most complete and the most able to reveal His holy and righteous disposition. God uses the truth expressed through His work on the chosen people of China to conquer and save all of mankind and allow them to see His holy and righteous disposition, so that they all come before God to praise Him. This is the wisdom of God's work. If the most corrupt people can be made complete by God, then making others complete is just a matter of course and Satan will then be thoroughly defeated. By working in China, God will receive the most resounding testimony and the greatest glory. If God's work of the last days were done in Israel or predominately Christian countries like the US or the UK, the end goal of conquering and saving all mankind could not be achieved. So according to the needs of the work of judgment, God has appeared and is working in China, which is most meaningful. From the target and location of God's work and its ultimate effect in each stage, we can see that God's work is truly wise and wonderful!" Hearing this, I said excitedly, "Yes, Israel is a God-worshiping nation and people there are the least corrupted among mankind. If the Lord returned to work

in Israel, God's work of conquest would not achieve a good outcome. China is the most backward and God-resisting of all nations, so by conquering the Chinese, not only does His work of conquest achieve the greatest outcome, He also better manifests His almightiness, His wisdom and His wondrous deeds. I now see just how significant God working in China in the last days truly is! I didn't know God's work but delimited His work using notions and imaginings—how arrogant I was!”

Then Audrey said: “No matter how or where God does His work, there is always mystery and truth to seek. As for how we should welcome the Lord's return, the Lord Jesus told us: **‘And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet him’** (Matthew 25:6). **‘My sheep hear My voice’** (John 10:27). There's this prophecy in Revelation, too: **‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me’** (Revelation 3:20). So, in welcoming the Lord's coming and seeking His appearance, most important is to listen for the voice of God. If we hear testimony that the Lord has returned, we have to seek and investigate it, to see if there is expression of the truth and if it's the voice of God. For wherever the truth is expressed, there too will be the voice of God, as well as His appearance and work. This is absolutely true. Just as Almighty God says: **‘The more that people believe something is impossible, the more likely it is to occur, because the wisdom of God soars higher than the heavens, God's thoughts are higher than man's thoughts, and the work of God transcends the limits of man's thinking and notions. The more that something is impossible, the more it has truth that can be sought; the more something lies beyond man's notions and imagination, the more it contains the will of God. This is because, no matter where He reveals Himself, God is still God, and His essence**

will never change on account of the location or manner of His appearance. The disposition of God remains the same regardless of where His footprints are, and no matter where the footprints of God are, He is the God of all mankind, just as the Lord Jesus is not only the God of the Israelites, but is also the God of all the people of Asia, Europe, and America, and even more than that, He is the one and only God in the entire universe. So let us seek God's will and discover His appearance in His utterances, and keep pace with His footsteps! God is the truth, the way, and the life. His words and His appearance exist concurrently, and His disposition and footprints are open to mankind at all times' (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 1: The Appearance of God Has Ushered in a New Age)." Almighty God's words thoroughly resolved my confusion. They uncovered the mysteries of God's appearance and work, decisively refuting my prior notions. I had longed to welcome the Lord's return for years, but never realized I was delimiting God's appearance and work to what I imagined and to the literal words of the Bible. How ignorant and blind I'd been! After the gathering was over, I took the initiative to ask Audrey for a copy of **The Word Appears in the Flesh** expressed by Almighty God.

Reading Almighty God's words, I saw how He unravels many of the mysteries of the Bible, like God's six-thousand-year management plan for the salvation of humankind, the inside story of the Bible and God's three stages of work, the meaning of God's names, the mystery of the incarnation, the significance of God's judgment work in the last days, how God sets the outcome and destination of all kinds of people, how Christ's kingdom will be realized here on earth, and more. Almighty God has expressed such a rich array of truths, and they're all mysteries and truths that I had never heard before. No one other than God could unravel these mysteries. The

words Almighty God expresses are full of authority, power and majesty. They are indeed God's utterances—they are the voice of God. I became absolutely certain that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned. I accepted Almighty God's work without hesitation, and I'm now following the footsteps of the Lamb.

71. The Test of a Difficult Environment

By Junior, Zimbabwe

Since I was little, I was always influenced by society. I liked going along with other people in everything I did—the people around me were Christians, so I was too. But when I longed to learn about God, I started pondering some questions: Why do we believe in God? How can we know God? In this dark and evil world, where is the truth, really? Why do people suffer hardship in life? These questions were like one mystery after another, and I never found answers. Fortunately, I accepted Almighty God's gospel of the last days, and I found the answers to all these confusing things in Almighty God's words. I learned that faith in God is about experiencing God's words and work, and through this coming to know, obey, and love Him. I also learned that in the last days, God uses judgment, chastisement, trials and refinement to perfect people and cleanse their corruption. So, I prayed for trials to come upon me. I even wished I'd been born in China so I could undergo the devil Satan's oppression and persecution like the Chinese brothers and sisters, and I could bear resounding witness and be made into an overcomer by God through that hardship. I was taken by surprise by how quickly I encountered such an environment.

Because of the pandemic, the company I worked for folded and I lost my job. I tried looking for work at a lot of other companies, but I never got called for an interview. As time dragged on, things just got worse. I didn't have an income or money to buy food. I didn't know what to do. Previously, I'd join online gatherings, read Almighty God's words, watch church movies, and do my duty with others after getting off work. These were the most important things to me; I felt they were a great way to practice faith. But now that I was going through this ordeal, I thought that

since I believed in the one true God, He'd certainly take care of me and help me. I also prayed to God, asking Him to give me a job. I thought that since I was a believer, God would give me everything I asked for, but that was not what God did. I felt some weakness then, and I was very confused. I read God's words and prayed every day, so why wasn't God helping me when I was suffering? When that came up in me, I thought of Job. When he lost all of his possessions, he was still able to stand firm in his testimony. Job believed that everything, good and bad, was God's sovereign arrangement, and he never had complaints. He thanked God for giving him material blessings, and when he lost these, he still praised the name of Jehovah God. Really thinking about Job's faith and prayers, I realized how paltry my faith was—it couldn't compare with Job's. I knew I should follow Job's example, and submit to God's sovereign arrangements like he had. But thinking about not having enough to eat, and how I'd used up my mobile data quota and couldn't attend online gatherings, I was at my wits' end. I prayed to God: "God, whether I starve or not, whether I can gather or not, is entirely in Your hands. I'm willing to entrust these difficulties to You, and submit to Your sovereign arrangements." Praying that way gave me a sense of peace. That same day, after my prayer, something happened out of the blue—my uncle called and asked me if I wanted to go work for his construction company. Though construction work is tiring, after a week's work I'd earned enough money to support myself for a while. I truly thanked God. When I cast my mind back on what I'd revealed during this period, I wondered why I'd thought that, just because I believed in God, He would provide me with anything I asked for. Then one day, I read some of God's words that gave me some understanding of this. Almighty God says: **"So many believe in Me only that I might heal them. So many believe in Me only that I might use My powers to drive unclean spirits out from**

their bodies, and so many believe in Me simply that they might receive peace and joy from Me. So many believe in Me only to demand from Me greater material wealth. So many believe in Me just to spend this life in peace and to be safe and sound in the world to come. So many believe in Me to avoid the suffering of hell and to receive the blessings of heaven. So many believe in Me only for temporary comfort, yet do not seek to gain anything in the world to come. When I brought down My fury upon man and seized all the joy and peace he once possessed, man became doubtful. When I gave unto man the suffering of hell and reclaimed the blessings of heaven, man's shame turned into anger. When man asked Me to heal him, I paid him no heed and felt abhorrence toward him; man departed from Me to instead seek the way of evil medicine and sorcery. When I took away all that man had demanded from Me, everyone disappeared without a trace. Thus, I say that man has faith in Me because I give too much grace, and there is far too much to gain” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?). “Man's relationship with God is merely one of naked self-interest. It is a relationship between a receiver and a giver of blessings. To put it plainly, it is akin to the relationship between employee and employer. The employee works only to receive the rewards bestowed by the employer. There is no affection in such a relationship, only transaction. There is no loving or being loved, only charity and mercy. There is no understanding, only suppressed indignation and deception. There is no intimacy, only an uncrossable chasm. Now that things have gotten to this point, who can reverse such a course? And how many people are capable of truly understanding how dire this relationship has become? I believe that when people immerse themselves in the joy of being blessed, none can imagine how embarrassing and unsightly

such a relationship with God is” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 3: Man Can Only Be Saved Amidst God’s Management). God’s words reveal our motives for receiving blessings as well as our corrupt dispositions. Lots of people are actually just seeking God’s comfort in their faith. They don’t want to suffer any misfortune, and they’re hoping that God will give them everything they want. They never care about whether they’re satisfying God. For them, submitting to God and meeting His demands isn’t important; what’s most important is that God gives them what they want. During my time of faith in the Lord, the pastors and elders often had us pray for God’s blessings. That kind of pursuit, however, makes our relationship with God abnormal. Just as God’s words reveal: **“Man’s relationship with God is merely one of naked self-interest. It is a relationship between a receiver and a giver of blessings. To put it plainly, it is akin to the relationship between employee and employer. The employee works only to receive the rewards bestowed by the employer. There is no affection in such a relationship, only transaction.”** God’s words are the truth, and I had to evaluate myself. I saw that I also believed for the sake of gaining God’s blessings. That intent was hidden deep in the recesses of my heart. I thought that since God has returned to the earth, He would certainly bless everyone who accepts Him. I figured since I’d accepted God’s work of the last days, blessings couldn’t be far off, that my life was about to get better. However, things didn’t turn out that way. I ran into hardships and my life got more difficult, and I became weak and negative. I didn’t have an income, I didn’t have food, and I couldn’t use the internet to join online gatherings. How could I keep practicing my faith? I was disgruntled, and it felt like God didn’t care about me. I had run all over the place looking for work and had prayed for God’s help, but God never answered, and He didn’t give me what I’d prayed for. I

couldn't understand, and developed doubts about God. It's just like God says: **"When I brought down My fury upon man and seized all the joy and peace he once possessed, man became doubtful"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?). The revelation of God's words made me feel ashamed of what I'd revealed. God's words also showed me that having faith for the sake of blessings was the wrong outlook. Because I had seen God as the bestower of blessings, and myself as the receiver of blessings, when God hadn't given me the good job that I wanted, I had blamed Him and thought He didn't care for me at all. I saw how absurd, ignorant, and foolish my perspective on faith was. I thought about how I'd gone to religious gatherings since I was a kid, and all I'd heard was, "God will give you great blessings! God will bless you if you're a believer. Pray and ask God for things, and He'll certainly answer." These things I'd heard from the religious world, my parents, and others around me had a big impact on me and made me feel that I just needed to believe to gain God's blessings and be free of worldly suffering. Before, I never thought that having faith with a desire for blessings was wrong, still less did I realize that it was a satanic disposition. I didn't have any understanding of this until I read God's words exposing people's corruption.

After that, I asked myself: Is having faith really just about receiving material blessings? Are those with enough money and material possessions the ones God approves of? If so, why did the Lord Jesus say in John 6:27, **"Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give to you: for Him has God the Father sealed"**? Why did He also say, **"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust does corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, and**

where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19–21)? I realized then that always asking God for material blessings is an extravagant desire of mankind—it’s our corrupt disposition, and God detests it. It’s entirely because Satan has misled man, which keeps us from knowing God’s identity, and particularly from knowing that He rules over our fates. We’re unable to submit to our Creator—rather, we are constantly making requests of Him. When everything’s going smoothly, we give thanks to God and praise Him, but when we face hardship in life, when God doesn’t satisfy our demands, we avoid God and blame Him. I thought of Abraham. He was willing to submit to anything from God. Good or bad, he didn’t have his own personal choice. When God told Abraham to sacrifice his son, Abraham was ready to do as God asked. It was really painful for him, but he didn’t ask God, “Why are You asking this of me? How could You treat me this way?” Abraham believed that no matter what God asked, it was correct and he should obey. He knew that God is the Creator, and he himself was a created being, so he should unconditionally accept and submit to any of God’s commandments or demands. Abraham’s faith gained God’s approval. But people today are totally different from Abraham. We’re always preoccupied with thoughts of material blessings and we ignore God’s will. The Lord Jesus exhorted us: **“Seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you”** (Matthew 6:33). We shouldn’t seek material blessings; rather, we should seek to satisfy God’s will, pursue the truth and do our duties well. That’s what matters. God is the Creator. He knows our thoughts best, and He also knows best what we need. But because of Satan’s corruption, mankind’s thoughts have been taken over entirely with greed and material blessings—we don’t believe in God to obey and satisfy Him, but just to gain blessings and

satisfy our own desires. Just as Almighty God's words reveal: **"All corrupt humans live for themselves. Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost—this is the summation of human nature. People believe in God for their own sake; when they forsake things and expend themselves for God, it is in order to be blessed, and when they are faithful to Him, it is in order to be rewarded. In sum, it is all done for the purpose of being blessed, rewarded, and entering the kingdom of heaven. In society, people work for their own benefit, and in the house of God, they perform a duty in order to be blessed. It is for the sake of gaining blessings that people forsake everything and can withstand much suffering: There is no better evidence of man's satanic nature"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words exposed the precise truth about me. I saw my ignorance and selfishness, and learned how I should pray and submit to God when circumstances didn't conform to my notions. I couldn't just ask for grace and blessings.

I ran into the same problem again before long. Since I had worked at my uncle's place for just a week before I quit, and after that I had just been at home focused on my duty, I ran out of money pretty fast. I didn't know where my next meal would come from or how I should go look for work because I didn't have a degree or any qualifications for employment. I had nothing to my name, and no money to buy more data on my mobile plan. I really needed the internet to join gatherings and do a duty. Thinking about this left me feeling weak again, and I felt like I couldn't see any hope. Just then, my mom told me that because of the pandemic, they had nothing to eat, and they hoped I could provide some things for them. Knowing my mom was in the same straits as I was was weakening and painful for me. I didn't know what to do. I felt like I was suffering so much more than other people, that my life was really hard. I couldn't get a clear understanding of

God's will. I thought that since I was busy with my duty every day, God should take care of me, so why did my situation keep deteriorating? During that time, I read God's words a lot and listened to quite a few hymns of praise. Two of those passages of God's words helped me understand His will. Almighty God says: **"In their belief in God, what people seek is to obtain blessings for the future; this is their goal in their faith. All people have this intent and hope, but the corruption in their nature must be resolved through trials and refinement. In whichever aspects you are not purified and reveal corruption, these are the aspects in which you must be refined—this is God's arrangement. God creates an environment for you, forcing you to be refined there so that you can know your own corruption. Ultimately, you reach a point at which you would rather die and give up your schemes and desires, and submit to God's sovereignty and arrangement. Therefore, if people do not have several years of refinement, if they do not endure a certain amount of suffering, they will not be able to rid themselves of the bondage of corruption of the flesh in their thoughts and in their hearts. In whichever aspects people are still subject to the bondage of their satanic nature, and in whichever aspects they still have their own desires and their own demands, these are the aspects in which they should suffer. Only through suffering can lessons be learned, which means being able to gain truth, and understand God's will. In fact, many truths are understood by experiencing painful trials. Nobody can comprehend God's will, recognize God's almightiness and wisdom, or appreciate God's righteous disposition when in a comfortable and easy environment or when circumstances are favorable. That would be impossible!"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). **"People have always made extravagant demands of God, always**

thinking: ‘We have renounced our families to fulfill our duties, so God should bless us. We have acted in accordance with God’s demands, so God should reward us.’ Many people harbor such things in their hearts while believing in God. ... People are so lacking in reason; they do not practice the truth and then they complain about God, and they do not do what they should do. People should choose the path of pursuing the truth, but they are fed up with the truth, they crave fleshly pleasures, and they always seek to obtain blessings and enjoy grace, all the while complaining that God’s demands of man are too excessive. They keep asking God to be gracious to them and to bestow more grace upon them, and to allow them to feel fleshly pleasure—are they people who sincerely believe in God? ... These words that people speak completely lack reason and faith. They are all spoken because people’s extravagant demands have not been fulfilled, which has made them dissatisfied with God. These are all things that pour forth from their hearts, and they completely represent people’s nature. These things exist within people, and if they are not thrown off, they can lead people to complain about and misunderstand God at any time or place. People will be likely to blaspheme against God, and they may desert the true way at any moment and in any place. This is very natural” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). In the past, I had focused on my duty every day, to the point I was paying little attention to my family, in the belief that God should reward me and bestow blessings on me. I hadn’t wanted lavish rewards from God, just a job that was enough for me to get by—after I got a job, I’d be able to do a better job in my duty. I’d felt like that was a reasonable request, not at all excessive. But reflecting on what God’s words had exposed, I saw that having those extravagant wishes and desires showed that I hadn’t submitted to Him; rather, I was demanding of

Him that He do one thing or another for me. God's words also showed me that if someone always has unreasonable demands of God, it's difficult for them to practice the truth, and they'll likely betray and forsake Him when their demands aren't met. I understood then why I had encountered these difficulties. On the face of it, it seemed like I was suffering a lot, that I was really pitiable, but in fact, I was going through the tempering of suffering. Although I felt like I couldn't take it, it wasn't that God was abandoning me. This was to let me see the incorrect viewpoints and impurities in my faith, and turn them in the right direction that God hopes people will follow. I couldn't help but wonder: "Don't I want a good job where I can earn some money? Don't I want mobile data and to have my basic needs covered? Don't I want to be able to do my duty smoothly, without any troubles? Yes, I do. So, since I hope to attain these things, why won't God arrange for me to have them? Am I just that unlucky, that unfortunate?" Absolutely not—I was incredibly lucky. This was God's love coming upon me. God had approved of these circumstances I found myself in. They were His orchestration and arrangement, that I might seek the truth, learn lessons, and cleanse the impurities in my faith. If I were to practice my faith entirely in a good, comfortable environment without experiencing any adverse, unfavorable situations, my faith and love for God would have motives, desires, and impurity, which He wouldn't approve of. God hopes that people are genuine, devoted and obedient toward Him under any circumstances. It's just like a child. If they only love their dad when he gives them a comfortable material life, but otherwise hate him and say, "If you don't give me everything I want, I won't respect you or recognize you as my father," what kind of kid is that? That's an unfilial child who lacks conscience and reason. Thank God! That was the situation I was facing, too.

Going through those things was exactly what I needed to cleanse the impurities in my faith.

After that, I read more of God's words: **"What is real belief in God today? It is the acceptance of God's word as your life reality and the knowing of God from His word in order to achieve a true love of Him. To be clear: Belief in God is so that you may obey God, love God, and perform the duty that should be performed by a creature of God. This is the aim of believing in God. You must achieve a knowledge of the loveliness of God, of how worthy God is of reverence, of how, in His creatures, God does the work of salvation and making them perfect—these are the bare essentials of your belief in God. Belief in God is principally the switch from a life of the flesh to a life of loving God; from living within corruption to living within the life of God's words; it is coming out from under the power of Satan and living under the care and protection of God; it is being able to achieve obedience to God and not obedience to the flesh; it is allowing God to gain your entire heart, allowing God to make you perfect, and freeing yourself from the corrupt satanic disposition. Belief in God is principally so that the power and glory of God may be manifested in you, so that you may do God's will, and accomplish God's plan, and be able to bear testimony to God before Satan. Belief in God should not revolve around the desire to behold signs and wonders, nor should it be for the sake of your personal flesh. It should be about the pursuit of knowing God, and being able to obey God, and, like Peter, obeying Him until one's death. These are the main aims of believing in God. One eats and drinks the word of God in order to know God and satisfy Him. Eating and drinking the word of God gives you a greater knowledge of God, only after which can you obey Him. Only with knowledge of God can you**

love Him, and this is the goal man should have in his belief in God” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. All Is Achieved by the Word of God). Although I’d read this passage of God’s words right after gaining my faith in Almighty God, at the time I didn’t truly understand it. It was only after going through all those hardships that I gained a little understanding of God’s will. True faith really isn’t like what I’d thought—that as long as I had faith in God and expended myself for Him, He should watch over and protect me, and meet my every need. That view of faith isn’t right. In our faith, we should experience God’s words and satisfy Him in all things. Whether God gives or takes away, we should submit to Him and genuinely give of ourselves. If in people’s faith, all they pursue is to know God through His words, and submit to His sovereign arrangements, God will approve of their faith. Anyone who can love God to the utmost and obey Him till death, like Peter, is someone who God has perfected. Thankfully, God enlightened me to know the proper perspective on faith through this situation, which made me feel steadfast and peaceful. I made a prayer of submission to God, just asking Him to give me strength to withstand that hardship. To my surprise, the next day, my uncle sent me a little money, allowing me to buy some food and mobile data. I gave heartfelt thanks to God for opening a path for me.

On top of that, I managed to get a part-time job. It wasn’t an easy job at all, but I could earn enough to meet my basic needs. I truly experienced that accepting and submitting to God’s orchestrations and arrangements is a fundamental lesson we should learn through real life, and that it can help us know God’s almighty sovereignty and wondrous deeds through our experience. This is the attitude we should have toward all sorts of issues in life. I recalled a passage of God’s words: **“When confronting real-life problems, how should you know and understand God’s authority and**

His sovereignty? When you are faced with these problems and do not know how to understand, handle, and experience them, what attitude should you adopt to demonstrate your intention to submit, your desire to submit, and the reality of your submission to God's sovereignty and arrangements? First you must learn to wait; then you must learn to seek; then you must learn to submit. 'Waiting' means waiting for the time of God, awaiting the people, events, and things that He has arranged for you, waiting for His will to reveal itself gradually to you. 'Seeking' means observing and understanding God's thoughtful intentions for you through the people, events, and things that He has laid out, understanding the truth through them, understanding what humans must accomplish and the ways they must adhere to, understanding what results God means to achieve in humans and what accomplishments He means to attain in them. 'Submitting,' of course, refers to accepting the people, events, and things that God has orchestrated, accepting His sovereignty and, through it, coming to know how the Creator dictates man's fate, how He supplies man with His life, how He works the truth within man. All things under God's arrangements and sovereignty obey natural laws, and if you resolve to let God arrange and dictate everything for you, you should learn to wait, you should learn to seek, and you should learn to submit. This is the attitude every person who wants to submit to God's authority must adopt, the basic quality every person who wants to accept God's sovereignty and arrangements must possess. To hold such an attitude, to possess such a quality, you must work harder. This is the only way you can enter into the true reality" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). Although I'd read this passage of God's words before, it felt different reading it after having gone through hardships. I could see

from God's words that seeking God's will, waiting and submitting is the first approach someone should have when they face a problem. But it's not a passive kind of waiting—it includes praying, reading God's words, seeking God's will, and reflecting on yourself. This way you can learn about your true state and understand what you should enter into. Through this kind of seeking and experience, we can see God's almighty sovereignty and His actual deeds.

At first I only wanted to do that difficult part-time job for one month, just so I could make enough to get by, then I'd spend the rest of my time on my duty. But I had a problem with my cellphone. I figured if I worked another month, I could buy another cellphone and a laptop. I was a church leader, however, and had a lot of church work to handle. Doing my duty was the most important thing for me—it was my priority, so I decided to quit my job. After the upper leader found out about my situation, she told me that to help me do my duty well, the church could help me buy a laptop and some internet bandwidth. I was really excited to hear that—happier than I can express. I knew this was entirely God's grace. I also saw that God hadn't been making things difficult for me at all, He just wanted me to be genuine and obedient. I had experienced God's love through suffering. Before, what I'd imagined about God's love for man was vague and didn't line up with reality. Only after experiencing those circumstances and learning a lesson from them did I truly realize that each of those circumstances had been orchestrated by God. He had done so to test me, to guide me to understand His will little by little, to change my mistaken perspectives on faith, and to get me on the right path of pursuit. This was truly God's love for me. I also came to understand the right attitude to have through hard times.

I faced another real test before too long. After a month in that job, just after I'd been paid, I was robbed. They got away with half of my salary. But thanks to God's protection, though they had knives, they didn't injure me. It immediately occurred to me that God let this happen because of His good intentions. I thought of Job being so rich, but when all of his possessions were taken and his children all died, he unconditionally submitted, had no complaints, and still praised God's name. I wasn't rich—I was just a regular person. Although I needed that money and had lots of plans for what I was going to do with it, I was ready to follow Job's example in faith and obedience. I prayed, "God, You are fathomless. I can't completely understand why this has happened, but I believe that Your will is hidden within it. I'm willing to submit to Your arrangements. Please move my heart and guide me so I don't sink into a negative state." I felt really calm after my prayer, as if nothing at all had happened. I kept doing my duty calmly like always, without feeling any worry or anxiety. Compared to my attitude before understanding the truth of God's sovereignty, it was totally different. That was because I had learned that God had orchestrated and arranged things in that way to cleanse and save me. My understanding of God's love was also deepened. God's love isn't solely expressed by giving us material blessings, because those items can only satisfy our fleshly desires. God's true love is to have us learn the truth through experiencing the judgment, chastisement, trials, and refinement of His words. It is to have us know why we have faith, how to fear God and shun evil, how to love and satisfy God, and ultimately to submit to all of His orchestrations and arrangements. I recalled some of God's words: **"Man's love of God is built upon the foundation of the refinement and judgment of God. If you only enjoy the grace of God, having a peaceful family life or material blessings, then you have not gained God, and your belief in**

God cannot be considered successful. God has already carried out one stage of the work of grace in the flesh, and has already bestowed material blessings upon man, but man cannot be made perfect with grace, love, and mercy alone. In man's experiences, he encounters some of God's love and sees the love and mercy of God, yet having experienced for a period of time, he sees that God's grace and His love and mercy are incapable of making man perfect, incapable of revealing that which is corrupt within man, and incapable of ridding man of his corrupt disposition, or making perfect his love and faith. God's work of grace was the work of one period, and man cannot rely on enjoying the grace of God in order to know God" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). **"By what means is God's perfection of man accomplished? It is accomplished by means of His righteous disposition. God's disposition primarily consists of righteousness, wrath, majesty, judgment, and curse, and He perfects man primarily by means of His judgment"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). Reading God's words, I deeply feel that God's work of judgment in the last days really is to cleanse mankind of all unrighteousness. The impurities in our faith and our corrupt dispositions can only be cleansed through the judgment and revelation, the trials and refinement, of His words. That will never be achieved merely by enjoying God's grace and blessings. I never would have understood these things without God's words, and without these difficult circumstances. Thanks be to Almighty God!

72. Temptations in Brainwashing Class

By Xu Hui, China

At the end of July 2018, I was arrested for believing in God and preaching the gospel. One day in October, the police took me to a siheyuan (courtyard house) in an ecological park on the outskirts of the city, which served as a brainwashing center. At the time, I was a little nervous and afraid. Images kept flashing through my mind of brothers and sisters being interrogated and tortured in secret. I silently prayed to God, “God, I don’t know how the police will torture me. Please give me faith and strength. No matter what torture I suffer, I will not do anything to betray You.” After I prayed, I felt a little calmer.

The person responsible for reforming us there was a captain surnamed Lang, who looked very cunning and crafty. He made us stand in a line and said, “The classes here are divided into fast and slow classes. If you want to reform and finish up here quickly, you can choose the fast class. In the slow class, the beatings can come anytime and anywhere. They’ll become as regular as meals.” When I heard him say this, I was very angry. It was an obvious attempt to make us so afraid of his tyranny that we would betray God. I had been arrested, which I knew had happened with God’s permission, so I was willing to submit to God’s orchestration and arrangements. No matter how they planned to persecute me, I would never betray God. Thinking this, I said, “I’ll take the slow class.” That night, Lang asked the twelve of us who had chosen the slow class to stand in a row in the yard. There were four or five male police officers carrying electric batons, occasionally activating their switches so they made a crackling sound. They also had bottles of hot chili water and mustard water in their pockets, ready to torment us with them at any moment. Seeing this,

I realized it was probably a test, a trial from God coming upon me, and I thought of something God said: **“In the last days, the beast will emerge to persecute My people, and those who are fearful of death will be marked with a seal to be carried off by the beast. Those that have seen Me will be killed by the beast.’ The ‘beast’ in these words undoubtedly refers to Satan, the deceiver of mankind”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 120). The Communist Party uses fleshly torture to force people to betray God, and if you can’t put your life on the line, you’re at risk of being taken, of being cast out with the slightest carelessness. I silently prayed to God, “God, no matter how badly they will beat me today, I am willing to put my life and death in Your hands, and lay down my life to stand firm to satisfy You.” After that, Lang asked me, “Which class do you really want to be in?” I said, “The slow class.” He was furious when he heard this, so he kicked me into the flower pond. My ankle struck one of the bricks around the flower pond, and it was very painful. Then, he kicked the other eleven people to the ground one by one, and ordered us to stand up. Just as we were about to get up, a few policemen sprayed our faces one by one with chili water and mustard water. I instinctively dodged and fell into the flower pond behind me. My face was burning, and I was choking and coughing. They then punched and kicked us, and sprayed chili water on us, torturing us for over an hour.

Next, they started giving us brainwashing classes. First, a man surnamed Huang played a video for us. The content was about how China has risen and become powerful and glorious. He also said things to condemn and blaspheme God. We debated with him, and he pointed out of the door, and with an ominous expression he warned us, “Whoever doesn’t want to be in this class can get out!” I knew that leaving the class implied some sort of heavy punishment from Lang, so I didn’t say anything more.

Every day before lunch and dinner, Lang would ask us one by one what we had learned in class, if there had been any change in our thinking, whether we believed in God or not, and who we had chosen between country and God. One day, Lang ordered the twelve of us to stand in a row and asked me, “Do you still need to go to class? Can you sign a letter of guarantee, a letter of repentance, and a letter of renunciation?” I knew that signing the “Three Letters” would mean denying and betraying God, so I said, “No.” When Lang heard this, he slapped me violently, causing a burning pain in my face. Then he interrogated and beat the other brothers and sisters in the same way. After one round, he came back to interrogate me again. I said no, and so he slapped me again. He interrogated us like this for nearly an hour, pressing each of us nearly four times. For three nights in a row, they either beat and kicked us, or tortured us with chili water, mustard water, and electric batons to force us to deny and betray God, each time, for nearly an hour. My legs were shocked all over until they were covered in black scabs. After a while, my legs became unbearably itchy, and I had to scratch as hard as I could and bleed to feel better. The brainwashing, which lasted for more than ten hours every day, made me extremely nervous. I didn’t know what questions they would use to pick at and torment us with next. At that time, whenever I heard Lang’s loud command, “Guards, grab the batons, get to it!” My heart skipped a beat. As I watched the police come toward us with their electric batons flashing with blue light, my body trembled uncontrollably.

I remember one day, when a sister didn’t answer one of Lang’s questions as he wished, he became angry and said, “You dare to contradict me?! Kneel!” The sister did not kneel, so Lang and several police officers dragged her off to the unmonitored area while kicking her. After a while, we heard her heart-rending screams. Over ten minutes later, she was

brought back covered in dirt and with her hair messed up. Again, Lang tried to frighten and threaten her into kneeling in front of him, then he kicked her to the ground and put a black plastic bag over her head. He sprayed chili water into it, causing her to shake her head, struggle, and cough continuously. They kept the bag on her for around two minutes before taking it off. Finally, she was forced to kneel before them. I was furious when I saw the atrocities Lang subjected her to. I really wanted to fight them, but I knew that not only would I not be able to help her by doing this, but that the rest of us would be beaten and tortured even more severely. That night, I didn't sleep. My mind was filled with all the images of the police torturing people I had seen over the last few days. I felt depressed and miserable. I was watching the Communist Party spread all kinds of fallacies to deny and condemn God, yet I didn't dare to refute them, and I suffered frequent punishment and beatings. I really didn't know if I could stand firm if this continued. I silently prayed to God, "God! Facing such a horrible situation is really frightening for me. I'm afraid the day will come that I truly won't be able to take it anymore. I don't have many of Your words memorized. What will I do if I'm sentenced to seven or eight years, and I don't have Your words to guide me? If the police slowly torture me to death, how will I withstand the pain? ... Oh God, there are too many unknowns and there's too much fear in my heart. I don't know if I'll be able to stand strong. God, please enlighten and guide me, and give me the faith to triumph over these demons' torture." This is how I sought and prayed, and how I weathered each and every day. As I contemplated and reflected, a sentence of God's word emerged clearly in my mind: **"Do not fear, the Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He stands behind you and He is your shield"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 26). After pondering God's words over and over,

my heart was brightened. I had God backing me up. Although I was in a dangerous situation and faced threats and beatings by the police every day, God was by my side supporting me at all times. Since that situation had come upon me, it was something I had to experience, and something I was capable of enduring. It's just that I didn't have true faith in God, so when I saw how savage and vicious the police were, I became afraid and unwittingly fell for Satan's temptation. This situation had happened with God's permission and under God's sovereignty. Weren't these police officers also in God's hands? God knew what kind of torture I could endure, so I only had to sincerely rely on God and believe that God would give me faith and strength and guide me in overcoming the persecution of the police. Once I realized this, I felt a great sense of release, and I had the faith to face this environment. I couldn't help but sing the hymn "Life's Testimony" to myself: "If one day I become a martyr, and can no longer bear testimony to God, the kingdom gospel will still be spread like fire by countless saints. Though I do not know how far I can walk this rugged road, I will still bear testimony to God and offer up my God-loving heart. All I want to do is carry out God's will and testify to Christ's appearance and work. It is my honor to dedicate myself to proclaiming and testifying to Christ. Undaunted by adversity, like pure gold made in the furnace, from out of Satan's influence emerge a group of victorious soldiers. God's words spread all across the world, the light has appeared among man. Christ's kingdom arises and is established within adversity. The darkness is about to pass, a righteous dawn has come. Time and reality have borne testimony for God" (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). The more I sang, the more motivated I felt. I felt that it was a great honor and the greatest blessing in my life to be able to welcome the Lord's return in the last days, to hear the Lord's voice, to follow the Christ of the last days, and to preach the gospel and fulfill my

duty. Now I was being tortured by the Communist Party, but this was being persecuted for the sake of righteousness, so this suffering was meaningful. No matter what kind of persecution I faced, I was completely willing to rely on God to stand firm in testimony, and not yield to Satan. In the following days, when faced with threats and beatings by the police, I was less afraid. I often sang hymns to myself silently and had a smile on my face. Once, a police officer said in a puzzled way, “We beat her every day. How can she still be smiling?” I thought, “You don’t believe in God, so you will never be able to feel the joy and peace that comes from God.”

One night, Lang asked the police to take us out to sign the letter of renunciation. Their purpose in brainwashing and torturing us was to force us to sign the “Three Letters” so that we would betray God and go to hell with them to be punished. I realized I wouldn’t escape torture that night. I prayed to God, “God! No matter how the police torture me, I wish to stand firm in testimony and satisfy You.” When a police officer saw that I hadn’t written anything in a long time, he kicked my leg hard. Lang came over, grabbed my collar, pulled me up by it, and slapped me hard, causing my face to burn with pain. Then he sent me to the base of the wall with another kick. The pain was so bad that I cradled my stomach and couldn’t stand for a while. He ordered me to stand up. Just as I got to my feet while leaning against the wall, a police officer kicked me again, and I fell to the side. Other police officers rushed over, some shocking my legs with electric batons, some slapping me in the face, and some kicking my stomach, waist, and legs, and I was tossing and turning on the ground. The beating continued for about half an hour, and I couldn’t help but scream as the pain rushed throughout my body. It was like a big, heavy stone pressing down on my body and suffocating me. Then, Lang grabbed me by the collar and pressed me into the chair, grabbed my hair, and yanked my head against the

back of the chair so that I was looking up. In a threatening tone, he asked, "Will you write?" I didn't say anything. He was so angry that he grabbed my hand and pressed it to the table, then told a male police officer to shock my hand. I bent my fingers and twisted my wrist as I struggled as hard as I could, so the male police officer didn't know how to go about shocking me. We were stalemated for a moment, until Lang said, "Forget it, you might end up shocking me." Then he let go of my hand. A while later, Lang waved a stack of papers in front of me and said, "They all signed. You're the only one left!" When I heard this, I felt an indescribable sense of loneliness and desolation. There had been so many sisters suffering together, but suddenly, in a blink of an eye, I was left alone, and I didn't know how the police planned to torture me, so I cried out to God in my heart. Seeing that I wasn't saying anything, Lang scolded me, saying, "So you're tough? You're the only exception? Beat her!" After that, the police kicked and beat me again. About ten minutes later, Lang said the electric baton was too small and ordered his subordinates to get a bigger one. Thinking I would have to endure even heavier torture, I felt an indescribable distress. My mind was flooded with images of all kinds of torture instruments used by the police. I didn't know if I could bear the torture. I couldn't help but feel anxious, and I wanted to get out of that situation. But I also knew how much God hopes that we are able to defeat Satan's dark forces and stand firm in our witness. I didn't want to be a deserter, but my flesh was weak; I was afraid I wouldn't be able to stay strong in my testimony. And so I prayed to God, "God, I know this is when I should bear testimony and I shouldn't turn tail, but I'm panic-stricken. I'm afraid I won't make it through the night, and afraid I won't be able to win out over the great red dragon's intimidation and torture, that I'll do something to betray You. If possible, I'm begging You to prepare the right

chance for me to find peace in my heart, to compose my state and lean on You to get through whatever is coming next.” After I prayed, Lang took me to a large room. One police officer pushed me into a chair and pressed my head down onto the table while other police officers held my arms, hands, and legs, making me unable to move. As soon as I struggled, they shocked my feet with electric batons. A police officer grabbed my hand and forced me to write the renunciation letter. I was furious, and thought, “You are forcing me to write a renunciation letter, but this doesn’t mean I’m betraying God. I believe that God observes everything.”

I stayed up all night and kept wondering how I should go through this situation. I thought of God’s word: **“When people have yet to be saved, their lives are often disturbed, and even controlled by, Satan. In other words, people who have not been saved are prisoners to Satan, they have no freedom, they have not been relinquished by Satan, they are not qualified or entitled to worship God, and they are closely pursued and viciously attacked by Satan. Such people have no happiness to speak of, they have no right to a normal existence to speak of, and moreover they have no dignity to speak of. Only if you stand up and do battle with Satan, using your faith in God and obedience to, and fear of God as the weapons with which to fight a life-and-death battle with Satan, such that you fully defeat Satan and cause it to turn tail and become cowardly whenever it sees you, so that it completely abandons its attacks and accusations against you—only then will you be saved and become free. If you are determined to fully break with Satan, but are not equipped with the weapons that will help you defeat Satan, then you will still be in danger. As time goes on, when you have been so tortured by Satan that there is not an ounce of strength left in you, yet you have still been unable to bear testimony, have still not completely**

freed yourself of Satan's accusations and attacks against you, then you will have little hope of salvation. In the end, when the conclusion of God's work is proclaimed, you will still be in the grip of Satan, unable to free yourself, and thus you will never have a chance or hope. The implication, then, is that such people will be completely in Satan's captivity" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself II). I realized that although I already had the will to put my life on the line to satisfy God, when I was faced with torture and torment, I became concerned with my flesh and always wanted to escape. Satan was seizing on my weakness to hound and attack me mercilessly. I was being forcibly brainwashed, tortured, and forced to sign the "Three Letters" to betray God. This was a fierce battle of life and death. If I wanted to continue believing in and following God, then I had to rely on God, have faith in God, and overcome Satan's temptation by relying on God's words. Once I understood God's will, I had the faith to face what would come next. But when I thought about how some brothers and sisters couldn't stand the torture and signed the "Three Letters," I was quite shocked, and I found it hard to accept it for a while. I thought of God's words: **"Today, I do only the work that is My duty to do; I will bind all the wheat into bundles, together along with those tares. This is My work today. Those tares shall all be winnowed out in the time of My winnowing, then the grains of wheat shall be gathered into the storehouse, and those tares that have been winnowed out shall be placed in the fire to be burned to dust"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?). In the last days, God uses the persecution of the great red dragon to reveal all kinds of people. He uses the arrests and persecution of the Communist party to reveal the true believers, the false believers, the cowardly, those who follow a crowd blindly, and the opportunists who hope to gain blessings. Those

who do not pursue the truth and only seek to fill their bellies are exposed and cast out, while those who genuinely believe in God and love the truth are saved and perfected by God. This is the manifestation of God's righteous disposition. When arrested, those who truly believe in God and love the truth will constantly pray to God, seek the truth, gain some knowledge of God, have true faith, be willing to lay down their lives to follow God, and gain the testimony of overcoming Satan. Those who do not pursue the truth and seek only to fill their bellies will betray God at even the slightest suffering and stop believing. They will naturally be revealed and cast out. In that environment, everyone must express their stance, everyone has to go through an ordeal, and no one can escape. It's just as God's words say: **“Even if these trials consist merely of minor circumstances, everyone must pass through them; it's just that the difficulty of the trials will vary from one person to another”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). God uses the service of the great red dragon to reveal and perfect people. Working in this way is so wise! Even if the others signed the “Three Letters” and timidly withdrew, I couldn't let them influence me and I couldn't just go with the flow. If I cared for my flesh and feared suffering, I would eventually fall as well. I swore to myself that even if I was beaten to death by the police, it would be better than dragging out an ignoble existence in this world after betraying God. No matter what circumstances I faced the next day, I would never betray God. Only later did I find out that several sisters were also forced by the police to sign the letter of renunciation. To force people to betray God, these police officers used all kinds of despicable and evil tricks. They were so sinister and vicious!

The next day, I was in class when Lang suddenly called me out. As soon as I went out, I saw my father and two cadres from my village. When

my father saw me, he hugged me and cried, saying, "I finally get to see you!" As I looked at my father's white hair at his temples and the exhaustion on his old face, a bitterness gripped my heart and tears welled up in my eyes. Lang then brought over a pen and paper and asked me to rewrite the letter of renunciation. I realized that the police were using my emotions to force me to deny and betray God, so I refused. One of the village cadres scolded me, saying, "Since when do the police beg you to write a letter of repentance? Even if they ask you to write it ten times, you have to do it." Lang echoed, "Yes, write it ten times!" At that moment, Huang, the person running our classes, also came over and said with a sanctimonious expression, "Don't be afraid. Just be brave and write the letter." I was especially disgusted when I heard him speak. When he saw that I was ignoring him, he pointed at me and yelled, "You can't leave if you don't write it, so hurry up!" My father cried as he tried to persuade me, "Please, just write it. We can't go home until you do. Do you know how much I had to run back and forth and how many people I had to seek out to find you? You have to write the letter. You can't go to jail!" Lang also said angrily, "Almost a dozen people have signed the letter, and you're the only one left. Are you really going to be the stubborn one?" The village cadres also tried to persuade me, "It's easy. Just write a few words, and we'll go home together. If you don't write the letter, your household registration will be struck from the village. You won't exist in the village, and you will never be allowed to return again." Everyone in the room started discussing what to do. My father whispered some anxious words of persuasion to me, "Just write it, you don't have to mean it. Let's get out of here first. You can believe in secret later if you want to. Why are you being so stubborn?" I thought to myself, "Who wouldn't want to leave this demonic place? But I can't just casually muddle through this and leave. Signing the 'Three

Letters' is something that betrays God and offends His disposition." But faced with my father's repeated begging and persuasion, I was at a loss. I thought, "Is God setting up this environment so that I take this chance to leave?" I constantly prayed to God to seek in my heart, "God! What is Your will?" At that moment, I suddenly realized that the price for leaving was signing a document that denied and betrayed God. I couldn't do anything to betray God. I also thought about how the many saints in all eras of history would rather be imprisoned and tortured to death than betray God. The reason I was at such a loss in this situation was because I loved the flesh too dearly, and I was unwilling to suffer and pay a price. Thanks to God's guidance, I was very calm at the time. I recalled God's words: **"In every step of work that God does within people, externally it appears to be interactions between people, as if born of human arrangements or from human disturbance. But behind the scenes, every step of work, and everything that happens, is a wager made by Satan before God, and requires people to stand firm in their testimony to God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). At this time, I understood even more clearly that their words were Satan's tricks and temptations. They were a test for me, and this was the time I needed to bear testimony for God. My father had been deceived by the Communist Party into standing on Satan's side to disturb my mind and shake my resolve. I couldn't do something that betrays and blasphemes God to seek temporary comfort, much less could I be controlled by my emotions and fall for Satan's tricks. After some time passed, Lang saw I wasn't writing, so he had the police take me back into the classroom. A few days later, they brought back my father and my uncle to persuade me, and they also had my father cry and trouble me, as well as express his emotional disturbance in front of me, but in the end, their tricks didn't work. Seeing Lang's look of

disappointment, I felt a sense of peace after relying on God to overcome Satan's temptations.

To force us to sign the "Three Letters," the police also used a despicable and lewd method. One night around midnight, Sister Jiang Xinming and I were being forced to stand still as punishment in the yard. Later several police officers took us back to the classroom. Lang ordered me and Xinming to take off our clothes. I thought, "Maybe he thinks we're dressed too warmly," so my sister and I took off our coats. Unexpectedly, both Lang and the police laughed. Then, Lang ordered Xinming to take off her pants, but she refused. A police officer rushed up and yanked her pants halfway down. She pulled them back up, and then he came to take off my clothes. I struggled to keep them on, so Lang nodded to another male police officer to come and help pull my pants down. At this moment, Yang walked in with a bottle containing several large brown spiders with long, slender legs that skittered around their container. Yang took the bottle containing the spiders, waved it in front of us and said, "Would you like to eat them?" Yang was picking out the spiders while he was talking, and he put the bottle in front of our mouths. I was disgusted, so I turned my head and instinctively pulled back. The police officers all laughed. Lang said, "Put the spiders in their crotch, or maybe on their chest, or maybe in their mouth." I was filled with anger, hatred, and fear. What would I do if they really put them in my pants? At that moment, I suddenly realized that everything is in God's hands, including the spiders. Without God's permission, the spiders couldn't do anything to me. I would lay it all on the line, and no matter how the police humiliated and persecuted me that day, I would not yield to Satan. Yang kept trying to pull the spiders out of the bottle, but he couldn't get them out. When he finally did, before he could bring them toward us, they fell to the ground. After a while, Lang told him

to stop. I knew this was God's protection for us. I saw that everything is in God's hands. It's just as God said: **"Any and all things, whether living or dead, will shift, change, renew, and disappear in accordance with God's thoughts. Such is the way in which God presides over all things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man's Life). Then, the police came to strip our clothes off again, until I was stripped to just my long underwear. Lang gritted his teeth and said, "Take it off! Take it off for me!" I struggled as hard as I could. The thought of being naked and being watched, ridiculed, and insulted by them made me feel ashamed. The more I thought about it, the more uncomfortable it made me. At that moment, I suddenly realized thinking like this made me vulnerable to Satan's tricks. The police stripping our clothes off only proved how evil they were. To force people to betray God, they were ready to do anything sinister and evil. I was being humiliated and persecuted for believing in God. This was a glorious thing, and there was nothing to be ashamed of. The image of the Lord Jesus being crucified for the redemption of humankind came into my mind. God is supreme and holy, yet He silently endured these humiliations to redeem humankind. God has paid so much for humankind, and I was inspired, so I prayed to God, "God, no matter how deeply they humiliate me or what pain I endure today, I will never betray You." I looked at the police officer angrily. He looked guilty, and let us put on our clothes and leave. I thanked God from the bottom of my heart for leading us in overcoming another of Satan's temptations. That day, Lang threatened me, saying, "Now you are the only one who hasn't signed the letter. Everyone else knows what's best for them, but not you. If you don't sign, then you will be the one to bear the blame for everyone!" I ignored him. He said in frustration, "Fine, on behalf of The Church of Almighty God, you win! You win! Congratulations!" He glanced at me, stood up, and walked out the

door in despair. Seeing Satan's humiliation and failure, I was very grateful to God, I knew it was God's words and the strength God granted me that gave me the faith to get to where I am now, and I glorified God in my heart!

One day, Lang talked to me for the whole morning, and in the afternoon, all the people at the brainwashing center in charge of reforming me took turns persuading me to sign the "Three Letters." They said, "If you sign now, you still have a chance to leave, but you won't get another chance like this after today. You will be sentenced to eight to ten years in prison. How old will you be when you get out?" I listened to their words of temptation, but I didn't care. I just felt they were foolish and ignorant, and that they were wasting their words. I thought of how, during my brainwashing and torture, God had always been silently by my side, leading me along, so what did I have to worry about? As for how many years I would be sentenced to and how much I would suffer, all these things were permitted by God. Even if I had to endure hardship and long-term suffering in the days to come, I was willing to obey God's orchestrations and arrangements, as well as to stand firm in testimony for God. Around dusk, my father suddenly came. He negotiated with Lang for a long time, and finally paid a bail of 5,000 yuan, after which they released me. Later, I found out that a friend of my father had been transferred to work there during my brainwashing training, so my father had had the chance to pay some money to get me out. I knew that this was one of God's miraculous arrangements. Otherwise, how could the police so easily release someone who wouldn't sign the "Three Letters"?

After undergoing this persecution and tribulation, I truly saw the wisdom of God's work. God used the persecution of the great red dragon to help me understand the truth and gain discernment, as well as to perfect my faith. Although I was in a dangerous situation and faced the threats,

intimidation, forced brainwashing, and daily torture by the police, God was by my side, enlightening and leading me with His words, allowing me to overcome Satan's temptations and stand firm in testimony for God. I also thoroughly saw the evil and ugly face of the Communist Party and its demonic essence of resisting and hating God, and I was able to hate and forsake it from the bottom of my heart. At the same time, I also truly experienced the authority and power of God's words, and I saw that everything is in God's hands, that God rules over everything, and no matter how savage Satan may be, it is only a tool in God's service. No matter how many dangers and tribulations I face in the future, I will follow God to the end!

73. A Disgrace From My Past

By Li Yi, China

In August 2015, my family and I moved to Xinjiang. I'd heard that the Communist Party had put strict surveillance and control measures in place there in the name of combatting violence and unrest from the Uyghur population, so it was quite dangerous there. After getting to Xinjiang, the atmosphere felt even more tense than I'd imagined. Police were on patrol everywhere, and we had to do a full-body scan to get through security whenever we went to the supermarket. When we waited for the bus, there were police patrolling the stops with guns strapped to their backs. Seeing all this made me really nervous. The Communist Party was already arresting and persecuting believers, so adding these strict surveillance and control measures on top of that meant that I was in danger of being arrested or killed at any moment. Around October, I heard that two sisters had been arrested on the way to deliver books of God's words and sentenced to 10 years. I was pretty shocked by that, they weren't leaders and workers, but they still got 10 years for delivering books of God's words. I was in charge of the church's work, so if I were arrested, I'd get at least 10 years. Images of my brothers and sisters being tortured in prison kept running through my mind. I felt really afraid, and I worried that I'd be arrested and tortured too, which would surely be a fate worse than death. I felt more and more scared and didn't dare think about it further. Later on, I heard some brothers and sisters fellowship on how they looked to and relied on God to do their duties in this kind of environment, how they saw His almighty sovereignty, and felt His care and protection. This really encouraged me and gave me the faith to get through this situation.

In February 2016, I learned that there was an evil person named Wang Bing in one of the churches I oversaw who was constantly finding fault with the leaders, seriously disrupting church life. This needed to be resolved as soon as possible or it would impact the brothers' and sisters' life entry. A few co-workers and I discussed this matter and they thought that I should travel to the church to address the issue. But I was kind of afraid, and thought to myself: "The sisters that got 10-year sentences were arrested at that church. The Communist Party even rounded up local villagers to announce the news, intimidating and threatening them into not believing in God. It's so dangerous there. Will I be arrested if I go?" After this crossed my mind, I found an excuse not to go. But then I saw that one of my partners was willing to travel there, and I felt kind of ashamed. She hadn't been a believer for long and had just begun training as a leader. There were so many problems in that church and it wasn't a good environment. I felt bad about letting her go there, so I said, "Maybe it's best that I go." When I arrived at the church, I saw that Wang Bing was unable to fellowship about any understanding of God's words in gatherings, and that he often found fault with leaders, seriously disrupting church life. I talked to the preacher about first restricting Wang Bing and stopping him from having contact with or misleading the others, and then fellowshiping on the truth to the brothers and sisters to help them gain discernment of him. This would stop him from disrupting them any further, and after that we could train Sister Zhong Xin to take over the church's work as quickly as possible. But I still had a few concerns, and I knew that it would probably take quite a bit of time to fully resolve the issues in that church. About half of the church's brothers and sisters had been arrested, so the longer I spent there, the more risk I'd be taking. I thought about how God's house had fellowshiped that some church work could be delayed in very dangerous environments to

avoid incurring greater losses. Since we'd already decided on a solution to the problem, I figured that I could let the preacher follow up and handle things from there on. So I rushed to hand off the remaining tasks and went back home.

The preacher later reported that Wang Bing was becoming increasingly brazen and that he was forming a faction within the church to attack the leaders, seriously disrupting church life. I fellowshipped with the preacher on some solutions, but the problem remained unresolved. I felt a little guilty. Dealing with disorder in the church was my responsibility, but I wasn't willing to resolve this issue out of fear of being arrested. That wasn't right. But then I thought about how a sister had almost been arrested recently while taking the train to a gathering. "What will I do if I get arrested on the train ride over there? I'm a leader, I can't do my job unless my safety is ensured." So I continued to push the problems of that church onto the preacher. But since her capabilities were limited, these issues remained unresolved.

In September 2016, I received a letter unexpectedly saying that four brothers and sisters from that church had been arrested. One of them, Zhong Xin, was brutally beaten. A couple of days later another letter came saying that the police had beaten her to death. This news hit me like a pile of bricks. I simply couldn't accept it. I knew that the Communist Party's torture methods were absolutely merciless, but I never imagined that someone would get beaten to death by them in a matter of days. It was terrifying. I felt like the air around me froze. I couldn't control my emotions, and I burst into tears. The more I thought about it, the more upset I became, and I kept asking myself how this had happened. I'd known for a while that an evil person was disrupting that church and that its members weren't able to live a normal church life. I was a church leader, but I'd

failed to go there and thoroughly resolve the problems out of fear of arrest. If I'd taken on a bit more responsibility, or thought of ways to cooperate with the other church members, and resolved those problems, if I'd reminded the brothers and sisters to be careful, maybe Zhong Xin wouldn't have been arrested and beaten to death by the police. Her death threw me into a state of intense guilt. I was terrified and repressed. I felt like I was in a really frightening place and I could hardly breathe. But I knew that at such a critical juncture, I couldn't keep running away, so I busied myself with helping the preacher deal with the aftermath. Before we could finish taking care of things, I learned that one of my partners had also been arrested and that the police had gotten some information about our church's principal leaders and workers. I'd been in frequent contact with those brothers and sisters, so if the police reviewed their surveillance footage, it was very likely that they'd find me. I was really worried that I might be arrested at any moment. If I was sentenced and sent to prison, there was no telling if I'd make it out alive. It was very possible that I'd end up like Zhong Xin, beaten to death by the police at a young age. The more I thought about it, the more frightened I felt and the less willing I became to do my duty. I didn't even want to stay in that place anymore. Because I never addressed this state and had failed for several months to deal with the issue of Wang Bing disrupting the church, I ended up being dismissed. After my dismissal, I did some text-based work in the church, but I still felt like it was dangerous being there. I was worried that I could be arrested any day and I really wanted to go back to my hometown to do my duty. The brothers and sisters fellowshiped with me, hoping that I'd stay and help them deal with the aftermath of everything that had happened. But I was so overcome with fear that I didn't listen to their exhortations at all, and insisted on leaving.

In April 2017, the church stopped me from attending gatherings and had me isolate and self-reflect at home because of my behavior. I couldn't hold my tears back when I heard that news. But since I'd abandoned my duty and deserted the church at such a critical time, I knew that it was what I deserved. I could see God's righteousness in it and I was willing to submit. I read this in God's words in my devotionals one day: **"If you play an important part in spreading the gospel and desert your post without God's permission, there is no greater transgression. Does it not count as an act of betrayal against God? (Yes.) So how, in your view, should God treat deserters? (They should be put aside.) Being put aside means being ignored, left to do as you please. If people who are put aside feel repentance, it is possible that God will see that their attitude is sufficiently repentant and still want them back. But toward those who desert their duty—and only toward these people—God does not have this attitude. How does God treat such people? (God does not save them. God despises and rejects them.) That is completely correct. More specifically, people who perform an important duty have been commissioned by God, and if they desert their post, then no matter how well they did before, or do after, to God, they are people who have betrayed Him, and they will never again be given the opportunity to perform a duty"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). **"God has the utmost loathing for people who desert their duties or treat them as a joke, and for the different behaviors, actions, and manifestations of betrayal against God, because amid the various contexts, people, matters, and things arranged by God, these people play the role of impeding, damaging, delaying, disturbing, or affecting the progress of God's work. And, for this reason, how does God feel and react toward**

deserters and people who betray God? What attitude does God have? (He hates them.) Nothing but loathing and hatred. Does He feel pity? No —He could never feel pity. Some people say, ‘Is God not love?’ Why doesn’t God love such people? These people are not worthy of love. If you love them, then your love is foolish, and just because you love them, that does not mean that God does; you may cherish them, but God does not, for in such people there is nothing worth cherishing. And so, God resolutely abandons such people, and doesn’t give them any second chances. Is this reasonable? Not only is this reasonable, it is above all one aspect of God’s disposition, and it is also the truth” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). The judgment and revelation of God’s words made me feel deeply ashamed. Zhong Xin had been beaten to death and my partner had been arrested. At such an important time, I should have been working with the brothers and sisters to deal with the aftermath of this, but instead I had just run away. Anyone with the least bit of a conscience wouldn’t have done something like that. I couldn’t forgive myself for doing that. I used to believe that no matter what I did wrong, God would have mercy and forgive me so long as I repented to Him. But I realized then that was just a notion and imagining. God says that He abandons those who give up on their duties and betray Him at critical moments, and that He won’t give them any second chances. Through reading God’s words, I learned that there are principles to His mercy and forgiveness. God won’t bestow His pardons and mercy on just anyone, regardless of what they’ve done to offend Him. Since the moment I fled, I felt like God had given up on me. I had no peace in my heart and I was filled with regret. I have no idea how many times I prayed or how many tears I shed over this. Whether God abandoned me or not, I wanted to render service for Him to repay my debt,

and I knew that however He treated me and whatever He did would be righteous. What I had done was so hurtful to God that I wouldn't complain even if He sent me to hell for it. I had made some sacrifices during my years of belief, and wanted to pursue salvation—I never imagined that when faced with arrest and persecution at the hands of the Communist Party, I would fear death, abandon my duty, and betray God, thereby committing a grievous transgression. Thinking about that left me really miserable and in despair. I couldn't stop crying and I was overcome with remorse. I wished that I hadn't insisted on leaving, and had kept doing my duty and dealt with the aftermath of the arrests along with the others in that crucial moment. Then I wouldn't be living in such misery and torment. That wasn't how I wanted things to turn out! But at that point it was too late. I'd made my own bed and I had to sleep in it. I hated myself for fearing death and being so selfish and vile. Someone like me wasn't worthy of God's forgiveness and mercy. I felt that since the church hadn't expelled me, I should render service as well as I could to make up for my transgression. In my duty after that, I went wherever the leaders arranged for me to go, even if I was sent to support churches in dangerous environments. After doing this for a while, I was able to achieve some results in my work. But I didn't ever want to talk about Zhong Xin's death and how I'd run away from the church at such a crucial moment. I wanted to shield myself from it and forget about it, but I wasn't able to. I felt like it was deeply branded on my heart and would never go away. Every time the thought of it came into my mind, it pained me and I felt really guilty.

One day I read something in God's words that shined a light on my state. Almighty God says: **“Antichrists do their utmost to protect their safety. What they think to themselves is: ‘I absolutely must guarantee my safety. No matter who gets caught, it mustn't be me.’ In this matter,**

they often come before God in prayer, pleading that God keeps them from getting into trouble. They feel that no matter what, they are indeed carrying out the work of a church leader and that God should protect them. For the sake of their own safety and to avoid being arrested, escape all persecution and situate themselves in a safe environment, antichrists often implore and pray for their own safety. Only when it comes to their own safety do they truly rely upon and offer themselves up to God. They have real faith when it comes to this and their reliance upon God is real. They only bother to pray to God asking that He protect their safety, not giving the slightest thought to the church's work or their duty. In their work, personal safety is the principle that guides them. If a place is safe, then antichrists will choose that place to work, and, indeed, they will seem very proactive and positive, showing off their great 'sense of responsibility' and 'loyalty.' If some work does entail risk and is liable to meet with incident, to get its doer found out by the great red dragon, they make their excuses and refuse it, and find a chance to flee from it. As soon as there is danger, or as soon as there is a hint of danger, they think of ways to extricate themselves and abandon their duty, without a care for the brothers and sisters. They care only about getting themselves out of danger. They may already be prepared at heart: As soon as danger appears, they drop the work they are doing at once, without a care for how the church's work goes, or for what loss it may incur to the interests of God's house, or for the safety of the brothers and sisters. What matters to them is fleeing. They even have an 'ace up their sleeve,' a plan to protect themselves: As soon as danger is upon them or they are arrested, they say everything they know, clearing themselves and absolving themselves of all responsibility to preserve their own safety.

This is the plan they have at the ready. These people are unwilling to suffer persecution for believing in God; they are afraid of being arrested, tortured, and convicted. The fact is that they have long since succumbed to Satan in their hearts. They are terrified of the power of the satanic regime, and more afraid still of such things as torture and harsh interrogation befalling them. With antichrists, therefore, if all is smooth sailing, and there is no threat at all to their safety or issue with it, and no hazard is possible, they may offer up their zeal and ‘loyalty,’ and even their assets. But if circumstances are bad and they could be arrested at any time for believing in God and doing their duty, and if their belief in God may get them fired from their official position or abandoned by those close to them, then they will be exceptionally careful, neither preaching the gospel and testifying to God nor doing their duty. When there is a slight sign of trouble, they become shrinking violets; when there is a slight sign of trouble, they wish immediately to return to the church their books of God’s words and anything related to belief in God, in order to keep themselves safe and unharmed. Are they not dangerous? If arrested, would they not become Judas? The antichrists are so dangerous that they may become Judas at any time; there is always the possibility that they will betray God. Furthermore, they are selfish and despicable to an extreme. This is determined by the antichrists’ nature essence” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). “Antichrists are extremely selfish and despicable. They do not have true faith in God, much less loyalty to God; when they encounter an issue, they only protect and safeguard themselves. For them, nothing is more important than their own safety. As long as they can live and won’t get arrested, they don’t care how much harm is done to the work of the church. These people are extremely selfish, they don’t think of

the brothers and sisters at all, or of the work of the church, they only think of their own safety. They are antichrists” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). The judgment and revelation of God’s words pierced straight to my heart. I had nowhere to hide—I couldn’t escape. I was just the sort of person that God described, who only cared about protecting themselves when faced with danger, who was selfish and despicable and had no consideration for the church’s work or the brothers’ and sisters’ lives. I thought back to when I first arrived in Xinjiang and saw how terrible things were there. When I saw that I was in danger of being arrested or losing my life at any moment, I regretted going there to do my duty. When I learned that there was an evil person disrupting things in one of the churches, I made excuses not to go out of fear of being arrested and tortured, even though this needed to be resolved urgently. I did end up going reluctantly later, but because I only thought of my own safety, I left before the problems were resolved. I was well aware that there were serious problems in that church and that I needed to go there to handle them, but I feared death, so I used my position to give orders instead of doing real work. I even pushed the other brothers and sisters to deal with it while I hid away, dragging out my ignoble existence. As a result, that church’s issues didn’t get resolved for several months. I even came up with a “reasonable” excuse, that as a leader, I had to protect my own safety to do my work, but in fact, I was just finding an excuse to flee in the face of danger. And when Zhong Xin was arrested and beaten to death by the police, I still only thought of my own safety, and worried about whether I’d be arrested and tortured to death. I even wanted to find an opportunity to abandon my duty and leave that dangerous place. After I was dismissed, I didn’t want to help with the aftermath of everything that had happened and I ran back to my hometown. The brothers and sisters didn’t reprimand me, but deep inside I

felt God's abandonment, disgust, and condemnation of me. What I regretted most was that the church had given me a chance to be a leader and entrusted so many brothers and sisters to my care. Yet when disaster struck, I just ran away, not caring whether the others lived or died or giving any thought to how the church's work would be hindered. I was a cowardly deserter and traitor, and the object of Satan's ridicule. Even more than that, this transgression had become an eternal wound in the depths of my heart. Through all this, I saw that I was a coward without any humanity who lived in a selfish and vile way! God's words hit the nail on the head, revealing the despicable, ulterior motives hidden deep in my heart. I couldn't keep fleeing reality. At that point I felt profoundly aware that I had committed a grave sin by betraying God and that I didn't deserve His salvation. I also thought of how God has become flesh twice and given everything in order to save mankind. Two thousand years ago, the Lord Jesus was crucified in order to redeem mankind. Now, in the last days, God has become flesh once again to save corrupt mankind, putting His life on the line to appear and work in the lair of the great red dragon, constantly pursued and persecuted by the Communist Party. But God has never given up on saving mankind. He has continued to express truths to water and supply us. God has given everything for man—His love for us is so real, so selfless! But I was incredibly selfish and lowly. In my duty I only protected myself and I totally disregarded the church's work. I was so indebted to God and didn't deserve to live before Him. All I wanted then was to render service for God. That way, I hoped, I might be able to alleviate my sinfulness a little.

In December 2021, I was elected to be a church leader again. But thinking of how I'd betrayed God and didn't deserve to be a leader, I told a leader in tears about how I'd deserted the church before. The leader said, "It's been years and you're still stuck in this state of negativity and

misunderstanding. It will be hard for you to gain the Holy Spirit's work like this." I also wondered why I was so depressed about my transgression after all that time and how I could resolve my state. After that, I made an effort to pray and seek. I read this in God's words: **"Even when there are times that you feel God has left you, and that you have been plunged into darkness, do not be afraid: As long as you are still alive and not in hell, you still have a chance. However, if you are like Paul, who stubbornly walked the path of an antichrist, and ultimately testified that for him to live is Christ, it's all over for you. If you can come to your senses, you still have a chance. What is the chance you have? It is that you can come before God, and can still pray to Him and seek, saying, 'Oh God! Please enlighten me so I understand this aspect of the truth, and this aspect of the path of practice.' As long as you are one of God's followers, you have hope of salvation, and can make it to the very end. Are these words clear enough? Are you still liable to be negative? (No.) When people understand God's will, their path is a broad one. If they do not understand His will, it is narrow, there is darkness in their hearts, and they have no path to tread. Those who do not understand the truth are as follows: They are narrow-minded, they always split hairs, and they always complain about and misunderstand God. As a result, the further they walk, the more their path disappears. In fact, people don't understand God. If God treated people as they imagined, the human race would have long since been destroyed"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Identify the Nature Essence of Paul). **"I do not want to see anyone feeling as though God has left them out in the cold, that God has abandoned them or turned His back on them. All I want to see is everyone on the road to pursuing the truth and seeking to understand God, boldly marching onward with unfaltering**

determination, without any misgivings or burdens. No matter what wrongs you have committed, no matter how far you have strayed or how seriously you have transgressed, do not let these become burdens or excess baggage that you have to carry with you in your pursuit of understanding God. Continue marching onward. At all times, God holds man's salvation in His heart; this never changes. This is the most precious part of the essence of God" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). "God became angry with the Ninevites because their wicked acts had come before His gaze; at that time His anger was derived from His essence. However, when God's anger dissipated and He bestowed His tolerance upon the people of Nineveh once more, everything that He revealed was still His own essence. The entirety of this change was due to a change in man's attitude toward God. During this entire period of time, God's unoffendable disposition did not change, God's tolerant essence did not change, and God's loving and merciful essence did not change. When people commit wicked acts and offend God, He will bring His anger upon them. When people truly repent, God's heart will change, and His anger will cease. When people continue to stubbornly oppose God, His rage will be unceasing, and His wrath will press in on them bit by bit until they are destroyed. This is the essence of God's disposition. Regardless of whether God is expressing wrath or mercy and lovingkindness, it is man's conduct, behavior, and the attitude man holds toward God deep within his heart that dictate that which is expressed through the revelation of God's **disposition**" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II). I WAS SO moved when I read those words from God and I felt deeply indebted to Him. I realized that I'd been misunderstanding God all those years. It is God's will to save mankind to the greatest extent possible. He wouldn't

give up on someone because of a momentary transgression—He'll give them ample opportunities to repent. Just like the people of Nineveh: God only said that He'd destroy them because they were doing evil, resisting, and angering Him. But before destroying Nineveh, He sent Jonah to share the word of God with them, thereby giving them a final chance to repent. When they genuinely repented, God's anger turned to forgiveness and mercy, and He pardoned their evil deeds. Through this, I could see God's great love and mercy for man. God's profound wrath and generous mercy are principled, and shift entirely based on the attitude that people hold toward Him. Though God's words of judgment and revelation are harsh, and even condemning and damning, they are not a real confrontation, they are just a confrontation of words. God's will was for me to understand His righteous and unoffendable disposition, to have a God-fearing heart, to truly repent to Him, and to be faithful to Him and do my duty well at any time and under any circumstances. At that point I realized that I was too intransigent and rebellious. I'd been misunderstanding God for years, passing verdicts on myself based on my own notions and imaginings, and trapping myself in a blind alley. God hadn't really given up on saving me. I was misunderstanding the good intentions behind His salvation. That reminded me of something God said: **“God's mercy and tolerance are not rare—man's true repentance is”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II). Though God has majesty and wrath, though He judges and reveals us, and even condemns and curses us, He is full of love and mercy. I felt really regretful and guilty after understanding God's desire to save mankind. I didn't want to keep running away from my past transgression or misunderstanding and being guarded against God. I was ready to repent. I wanted to use the lesson of this failure to caution myself. I'd been selfish, vile, and afraid of death. In the face of danger, I had become a deserter,

disregarding the church's work. I realized that my fear of death was my greatest weakness, and that I had to seek the truth to resolve and forsake it.

I read this passage of God's words later: **"From the perspective of human notions, they paid such a great price to spread the work of God, but were ultimately killed by Satan. This does not accord with human notions, but this is precisely what happened to them. It is what God allowed. What truth can be sought in this? Was God allowing them to die this way His curse and condemnation, or was it His plan and blessing? It was neither. What was it? People now reflect on their deaths with much heartache, but that was how things were. Those who believed in God died that way, how is this to be explained? When we mention this topic, you put yourselves in their position, so are your hearts sad, and do you feel a hidden pain? You think, 'These people did their duty to spread God's gospel and should be considered good people, so how could they come to such an end and such an outcome?' Actually, this was how their bodies died and passed away; this was their means of departure from the human world, yet that did not mean their outcome was the same. No matter what the means of their death and departure was nor how it happened, it was not how God defined the final outcomes of those lives, of those created beings. This is something you must see clearly. On the contrary, they used precisely those means to condemn this world and to testify to God's deeds. These created beings used their most precious lives—they used the last moment of their lives to testify to God's deeds, to testify to God's great power, and to declare to Satan and the world that God's deeds are right, that the Lord Jesus is God, that He is the Lord, and God's incarnate flesh. Even down to the final moment of their lives, they never denied the name of the Lord Jesus. Was this not a form of**

judgment upon this world? They used their lives to proclaim to the world, to confirm to human beings that the Lord Jesus is the Lord, that the Lord Jesus is Christ, that He is God's incarnate flesh, that the work of redemption He did for all humanity allows humanity to live on—this fact is forever unchanging. Those who were martyred for spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus, to what extent did they perform their duty? Was it to the ultimate extent? How was the ultimate extent manifested? (They offered their lives.) That's right, they paid the price with their lives. Family, wealth, and the material things of this life are all external things; the only thing that is related to the self is life. To every living person, life is the thing most worthy of being treasured, the most precious thing and, as it happens, these people were able to offer their most precious possession—life—as confirmation of and testimony to God's love for mankind. Until the day they died, they did not deny God's name, nor did they deny God's work, and they used their last moments of life to testify to the existence of this fact—is this not the highest form of testimony? This is the best way of doing one's duty; this is what it is to fulfill one's responsibility. When Satan threatened and terrorized them, and, in the end, even when it made them pay the price of their lives, they did not abandon their responsibility. This is what it is to fulfill one's duty to the utmost extent. What do I mean by this? Do I mean to have you use the same method to testify of God and to spread His gospel? You do not necessarily need to do so, but you must understand that this is your responsibility, that if God needs you to, you should accept it as something you are honor-bound to do” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). I felt really ashamed after reading God's words. Saints through the ages have laid down their lives and spilled their blood to

spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Countless were martyred for God. They were stoned to death, dragged to death by horses, grilled alive, or crucified upside down. Many missionaries knew that by coming to China they risked being killed, but they still put their lives on the line to come and preach here. And now, plenty of believers have been tortured and persecuted to death by the Communist Party for spreading the kingdom gospel, thereby sacrificing their lives to bear a resounding witness for God. They were persecuted for the sake of righteousness, and all of their deaths were meaningful and approved of by God. Before, I was never able to see those things clearly, and I didn't have any understanding of God's almighty sovereignty. I just feared death and thought that everything would end when I died. I gave up my duty, lived an ignoble existence, and betrayed God in the face of the Communist Party's mad persecution. This became a serious transgression and a permanent stain on my faith. I understood then that whatever we face in life and whatever suffering we endure is ordained by God. We can't run away from it. If God permitted me to die, I should submit to it, and follow in the footsteps of the saints who sacrificed their lives to testify to God throughout history. This thought allowed me to face death properly and gave me more faith in God. No matter what I faced in the future, I was ready to lean on God and stand firm in my witness, and I wouldn't abandon my duty or betray God again.

On July 6, 2022, my partner came to me and said nervously, "Something happened. Three leaders have been arrested." I felt uneasy after I heard her say that. Those three leaders had been in contact with lots of people and host families, and one of them had been in touch with us just a few days earlier. We had to deal with the aftermath of their arrests immediately to prevent even greater losses. But I still felt a little afraid. If those brothers and sisters were being watched, I might walk right into the

police's trap by getting in contact with them. But then I thought of the painful lesson I'd learned when I deserted the church last time, and how I'd betrayed God and offended His disposition. That was a pain that I would never forget and I didn't want to repeat the same mistake. So I kept praying to God, "Oh God, I promise to stay true to my duty in the face of this situation and to not run away. Please give me faith and strength."

After that, I rushed to notify the brothers and sisters that they should be on high alert, and moved the books of God's words to safe places. Then it occurred to me that my house wasn't safe, either, so I decided to go home and tell my mother-in-law to go and rent a room somewhere else. Right as I approached the entrance, I saw two young men dressed in black, and didn't dare go inside. Later, I learned that my mother-in-law had already been arrested, and those men in black were police officers. I also found out that the sister who'd gone out to tell the others to move at the same time as me hadn't come back and had probably been arrested. The circumstances didn't allow me to give it much thought, and I rushed to deal with the aftermath with the sister I was partnered with. I found out later that it was a coordinated arrest operation by the Communist Party, and that 27 people had been arrested between the night of the 5th and the day of the 6th. Faced with this awful situation, I knew that God was giving me a chance to make a different choice. Before, I'd been a deserter, betraying God. I couldn't let God down again this time, I had to lean on God, do my duty, and work with the others to deal with the aftermath of these arrests. After that, I continued to deal with the situation with my brothers and sisters. Practicing this way made me feel more at ease.

When I talk about my transgression now, I'm able to face and acknowledge that I'm a selfish and despicable person who fears death. I don't want to be that kind of person anymore. I want that transgression to

be like an alarm bell, to remind me not to repeat the same mistake. Now when I see brothers and sisters in a similar state, I offer fellowship to them so that they can understand God's righteous and unoffendable disposition, and take that as a warning. That transgression is still engraved on my heart and it still pains me, but it has also become one of the experiences I treasure most in my life.

74. Being Called Out Unmasked Me

By Sharon, Spain

One day in December 2021, another sister told me Sister Arianna, who had been transferred to another church from ours, said that I was careless in my duty, and I didn't deal with problems that came up quickly enough in my gospel work, which lowered the team's efficiency and effectiveness. She said I had false leader behaviors. That sister reminded me to reflect on myself. I felt angry, thinking, "Lately I haven't been doing detailed follow-up, but there's a good reason. If you have something to say, say it to my face. By saying it behind my back, aren't you trying to cause trouble? What will the brothers and sisters think of me? Since you talked about me like that, I won't let you off easily. I'll expose your faults, too, so that the others know it's not my problem, but it's all on you." So I said to that sister, "Arianna has always looked down on me and found fault with me. Everyone knows that she's not a great person. She never worked well with others, but was really nitpicky. Now she's targeting me, but I never did anything to her. It might be because I transferred her to another church, so she lost her title as team leader and she wants to take revenge on me for that." Even after saying that, I still felt like what Arianna had done was incredibly embarrassing for me. She exposed me in front of all those people. If everyone believed her, how would they see me? Would they think I was a false leader? And if it was reported to upper leadership, I might even lose my position. I was more and more preoccupied with it and started to hate Arianna. Wasn't she clearly singling me out? I figured if she was unkind, she couldn't blame me for being unfair; so as long as I was leader, she wouldn't see another promotion. I would bring all her behavior to light, make sure everyone gained discernment, and get her out of the church if I

found out she was judging people behind their backs. I wasn't comfortable with this kind of thinking and wondered if treating her that way was in line with God's will. God had allowed this to happen, and I wasn't seeking the truth or self-reflecting, but had my gaze fixed squarely on her, and I wanted to pounce on her faults to counter her, to expose her and even take revenge. I knew that wasn't accepting the truth.

I gave this some thought that night. In my heart, I still couldn't accept what Arianna said about me, but really thinking about it, was I a good, competent leader? A leader should have a grasp on every facet of the work and resolve problems as soon as they're found. I was in charge of gospel work, so when that team ran into problems, I should offer practical help and guidance right away. But I hadn't been doing much of that. Isn't a false leader someone who doesn't do practical work? Arianna wasn't wrong. She wasn't an evil person. She had some gifts and strengths and she got results in her duty. If I didn't let her do a duty or even kicked her out because of a personal grudge, not only would it hurt Arianna, but it would disrupt the work of the church. I couldn't do something to disgust God. At that thought I was able to let go of my bias toward her a bit. I also reflected on what kind of practical work I wasn't doing. I knew I had to start making changes in the areas she had mentioned and communicating with the brothers and sisters about their difficulties. I felt better after doing that.

At the time I thought it had all passed, but a couple days later I learned that Arianna talked about signs of my being a false leader in a gathering with more than 40 people. All my anger boiled up to the surface when I heard this, and I thought Arianna exposing me in front of so many people really dragged my name through the mud. How could I hold my head up if she kept doing that? I could even be dismissed for being a false leader. I wanted to show her what's what, so she didn't think I was a docile little

lamb! If she wanted to expose me in front of everyone and damage my reputation, I could find out what she did wrong and collect evidence, then find a chance to clear her out. I was constantly on edge over the next few days, thinking about how to salvage my pride and dignity, how to get back at her. I told the leader at her new church that she didn't have good humanity and had always been judgmental toward leaders and workers, so she should keep an eye on her and waste no time dismissing her if she sees her acting up. After I said all of that I did feel kind of guilty and uneasy. I thought, "What am I doing? Isn't this an eye for an eye, isn't it lashing out and excluding others? What lesson does God want me to learn from this?" Then I finally came before God to pray and seek.

In my seeking, I thought of God's words exposing antichrists who exclude anyone they disagree with. Almighty God says: **"What is the main objective of an antichrist when they attack and exclude a dissenter? They seek to create a situation in the church where there are no voices contrary to their own, in which their power, their leadership status, and their words are all absolute. Everyone must heed them, and even if they have a difference of opinion, they must not express it, but let it fester in their heart. Anyone who dares to openly disagree with them becomes the antichrist's enemy, and they will think of any way they can to make things hard for them, and can't wait to make them disappear. This is one of the ways that antichrists attack and exclude a dissenter in order to shore up their status and protect their power. They think, 'It's fine for you to have different opinions, but you can't go around talking about them as you please, much less compromise my power and status. If you have something to say, you can say it to me in private. If you say it in front of everyone and cause me to lose face, you are asking for trouble, and I'll have to take care of you!'** What kind of disposition is

this? Antichrists do not permit others to speak freely. If they have an opinion—whether about the antichrist or anything else—they cannot just bring it up at random; they must consider the antichrist’s face. If not, the antichrist will brand them an enemy, and attack and exclude them. What kind of nature is this? It is the nature of an antichrist. And why do they do this? They do not allow the church to have any alternative voices, they do not permit any dissenters in the church, they do not allow God’s chosen ones to openly fellowship the truth and discern people. What they fear most is being exposed and discerned by people; they are constantly trying to consolidate their power and the status they have in people’s hearts, which they feel must never be shaken. They could never tolerate anything that threatens or affects their pride, reputation, or status and value as a leader. Is this not a manifestation of the malicious nature of antichrists? Not content with the power they already possess, they consolidate and secure it and seek eternal domination. Not only do they want to control others’ behavior, but also their hearts. These methods that antichrists use are wholly in order to protect their power and status, and are entirely the result of their desire to hold on to power. ... This is especially true when a dissenter is present, and the antichrist hears that the dissenter has said something about them or criticized them behind their back. In this case, they will resolve the matter in short order, even if it means missing a night’s sleep and a day’s food. How is it that they can exert such effort? It is because they feel that their status is in peril, that it has been challenged. They feel that if they do not take such action, their power and status will be in danger—that once their evil deeds and scandalous conduct are exposed, they will not only be unable to hold onto their status and power, but will also be cleared out or expelled

from the church. That is why they are desperately impatient in thinking of ways to suppress the matter and dispel all hidden perils to them. This is the only way they can hold on to their status. Status is the breath of life, as far as antichrists are concerned. As soon as they hear that someone is going to expose or report them, they are terrified to distraction, fearful that come tomorrow, they will lose their status and never again enjoy the feeling of privilege that status has brought them, nor the benefits of status. They fear that no one will defer to them or follow them anymore, that no one will curry their favor or do their bidding anymore. But what is most intolerable to them is not just that they will lose their status and power, but that they may even be cleared out or expelled. If that were to happen, all the advantages and feelings of privilege that status and power have given them, as well as the hope for all the blessings and rewards gained by believing in God would be lost in an instant. This prospect is what is hardest for them to bear” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Two: They Attack and Exclude Dissenters). **“For an antichrist, the dissenter is a threat to their status and power. Whoever threatens their status and power, no matter who it may be, antichrists will go to any lengths to ‘take care’ of them. If these people truly cannot be brought to heel or recruited, then the antichrists will bring them down or clear them out. In the end, the antichrists will achieve their goal of having absolute power, and being a law unto themselves. This is one of the techniques that antichrists habitually use to maintain their status and power—they attack and exclude dissenters”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Two: They Attack and Exclude Dissenters). God’s words were really poignant and left me afraid. I hadn’t realized that I was able to lash out and exclude someone for my name and status and I was doing an antichrist’s evil. When I heard that Arianna had told others I didn’t do

practical work, I didn't think about whether it was true, but just thought she was targeting me and judging me behind my back. It wounded my pride so I started to dislike her and bear a grudge, even wanting to lash out at her. Then when I found out about her exposing me at that larger gathering, I hated her even more. I wanted to salvage my pride and position, so I made a big deal over her past transgressions, and others would think she didn't have good humanity, and would reject her. I even encouraged her current leader to keep an eye on her behavior, hoping to find a chance to get her kicked out. I was well aware that she had gifts and strengths, and did okay in her duty, that she should keep doing a duty in the church. I also knew that Arianna was revealing real problems of mine, but it touched upon my face and status, so I started to see her as a dissenter, an enemy, and a threat to my power and position. I wanted to get lash out at her, to revenge. I really did have a vicious nature! Then I thought about the antichrists that have been expelled from the church. The moment someone threatened their status, they'd lash out, wanting to turn the church into their kingdom, to rule everything. They ended up kicked out for doing too much evil. My behavior was no different from those antichrists' behavior.

I continued to reflect on myself, on why I'd been a believer for so many years, but couldn't stop myself from taking an antichrist's path and doing such evil things. Then in a gathering we read **"Those Who Obey God With a True Heart Shall Surely Be Gained by God."** There was one passage that went straight to the core for me. Almighty God says: **"Since you believe in God, you must put faith in all of the words of God and in all of His work. Which is to say, since you believe in God, you must obey Him. If you are unable to do this, then it does not matter whether you believe in God or not. If you have believed in God for many years, and yet have never obeyed Him, and do not accept the entirety of His**

words, and instead ask that God submit to you and act according to your notions, then you are the most rebellious of all, you are a nonbeliever. How could such people be able to obey the work and words of God that do not conform to the notions of man? Most rebellious of all are those who intentionally defy and resist God. They are the enemies of God, the antichrists. Theirs is always an attitude of hostility toward the new work of God; they never have the slightest inclination to submit, nor have they ever gladly submitted or humbled themselves. They exalt themselves before others and never submit to anyone. Before God, they consider themselves the best at preaching the word, and the most skillful in working on others. Never do they discard the ‘treasures’ in their possession, but treat them as family heirlooms for worship, for preaching about to others, and they use them to lecture those fools who idolize them. There are indeed a certain number of people like this in the church. It can be said that they are ‘indomitable heroes,’ generation after generation sojourning in the house of God. They take preaching the word (doctrine) to be their highest duty. Year after year, generation after generation, they go about vigorously enforcing their ‘sacred and inviolable’ duty. None dare touch them; not a single person dares openly reproach them. They become ‘kings’ in the house of God, running rampant as they tyrannize others from age to age. This pack of demons seeks to join hands and demolish My work; how can I allow these living devils to exist before My eyes? Even those who are only half obedient cannot carry on until the end, much less these tyrants without the slightest obedience in their hearts! The work of God is not easily gained by man. Even using all the strength they have, people can only gain a mere portion of it, ultimately allowing them to be made perfect. What, then, of the children of the archangel,

who seek to destroy the work of God? Do they not have even less hope of being gained by God?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God). God's words pierced my heart and I saw His righteous, majestic disposition. What scared me even more were these words: **"never submit to anyone," "None dare touch them,"** and **"They become 'kings' in the house of God, running rampant as they tyrannize others from age to age. This pack of demons seeks to join hands and demolish My work; how can I allow these living devils to exist before My eyes?"** When I found out Arianna had exposed me as a false leader, I responded with enmity, discontent, resentment, and resistance. I lashed out viciously out of anger. Even as a church leader, I wouldn't accept the truth and totally lacked submission. When someone revealed my problems, when my pride was wounded and my position threatened, I wanted to use every means to hold them back and get back at them, even trying to take away their right to do a duty and run them out of the church. I had this malicious mentality, that I wouldn't rest until I'd totally ruined them. I'd become a "king" in the church that no one dared touch. How's that different from the CCP demons, those dictators? Their motto is "Let those who comply with me thrive and those who resist me perish." To maintain its rule and consolidate its power, the CCP oppresses, uproots, and completely eradicates anyone who disagrees or dares to expose the evil it does. That's what it did at the Tiananmen Square demonstrations, what it does to the ethnic minorities, and it's even worse with believers: arresting, oppressing, persecuting us. So many innocent lives have been lost at their hands! I'd been educated and influenced by those communist demons since I was little. So many satanic poisons had become very deeply entrenched within me, like "Only I reign supreme," "Let those who comply with me thrive and those who resist me perish," "If you're unkind, don't blame me for being unfair," and "Here's a taste of your

own medicine.” These satanic poisons had become my rules for survival, making me more arrogant and vicious. I was living by these things, so I was capable of doing evil, oppressing and hurting others. I also thought about how God has fellowshiped so many truths about discerning false leaders and antichrists. Now everyone’s learning the truth and waking up, so some people expose and report false leaders. This is practicing the truth and protecting the church’s work—it’s a positive thing. No matter what sort of person the one who exposes me is, whether they’re targeting me, if they say it to my face or not, as long as what they say is the truth, I should accept it from God, and properly accept it, submit, and learn a lesson. That’s accepting the truth and submitting to God. But as for me, not only did I refuse to submit, but I lashed out at the one who exposed me. That wasn’t a personal dispute, but I was rejecting the truth and resisting God. Realizing this, I hated myself and felt kind of afraid. I quickly came before God to pray: “God, I was wrong. When I was exposed by Arianna, I didn’t reflect on myself or learn a lesson, but I went after her. I can see I really have a vicious nature. God, I want to repent to You.”

I reflected on myself in light of what Arianna had said about my problems and started doing real follow-up on work details. I discovered there really were a lot of problems. Like some brothers and sisters who were new to the work of sharing the gospel weren’t familiar with truths of visions, so they weren’t able to resolve the notions and difficulties of the people they preached to. Some didn’t understand the principles of spreading the gospel, so unsuitable people were being converted. Some new believers didn’t remotely understand the truth even after a while of being watered, and some weren’t interested in the truth and dropped out. It was a waste of a lot of our resources. I brought up the problems I’d seen in a gathering and fellowshiped on the principles to set things right. The brothers and sisters

started making plans to equip themselves with truths of visions, and when they didn't understand or couldn't clearly fellowship something, we'd have fellowship on it together. Before long, they had more clarity on truths of visions and the team was more successful. I realized God allowed Arianna to expose me as a false leader and point out I wasn't doing practical work to get me to reflect on myself and do my work well. He was protecting me.

I thought of another passage of God's words later on: **"God works in every single person, and no matter what His method is, what kind of people, matters, and things He makes use of in His service, or what kind of tone His words have, He only has one end goal: saving you. And how does He save you? He changes you. So how could you not suffer a bit? You are going to have to suffer. This suffering can involve many things. First, people must suffer when they accept the judgment and chastisement of God's words. When God's words are too severe and explicit and people misinterpret God—and even have notions—that can be painful, too. Sometimes God raises up an environment around people to expose their corruption, to make them reflect on and know themselves, and they will suffer a little then, too. Sometimes, when they are directly pruned, dealt with, and exposed, people must suffer. It is as if they are undergoing surgery—if there is no suffering, there is no effect. If every time you are pruned and dealt with, and every time you are laid bare by an environment, it arouses your feelings and gives you a boost, then through this process you will enter the truth reality, and will have stature. ... If God arranges certain environments, people, matters, and things for you, if He prunes and deals with you and if you learn lessons from this, if you have learned to come before God, learned to seek the truth, and, unknowingly, are enlightened and illuminated and attain the truth, if you have experienced a change in these**

environments, reaped rewards, and made progress, if you begin to have a little comprehension of God's will and you cease to complain, then all of this will mean that you have stood firm in the midst of the trials of these environments, and have withstood the test. As such, you will have gotten through this ordeal. How will God regard those who withstand the test? God will say that they have a true heart and can endure this kind of suffering, and that, deep down, they love the truth and want to gain the truth. If God has this kind of assessment of you, are you not then someone with stature? Do you not then have life? And how is this life attained? Is it bestowed by God? God supplies you in various ways and uses various people, things, and objects to train you. This is as if God is personally giving you food and drink, personally delivering various foodstuffs before you for you to eat your fill and enjoy; only then can you grow and stand strong. This is how you must experience and comprehend these things; this is how to submit to everything that comes from God" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Gain the Truth, One Must Learn From the People, Matters, and Things Nearby).

Through all of this I realized that God had allowed Arianna to expose problems in my duty. It wasn't easy for me to accept, but it was so beneficial for my life entry. Being dealt with that way helped me see all sorts of characteristics of a false leader in me and motivated me to seek the truth and change. On top of that, I saw my arrogant, vicious nature, that I was able to oppress and exclude someone to protect my name and status. This really gave me a clear view of the truth of my corruption. I hated myself from my core and became able to pursue the truth and cast off corruption. This was God's special grace, and His love and salvation for me. I'm so grateful to God!

75. Learning From Expelling an Evildoer

By Kaitlyn, Netherlands

In March 2021, I served as a leader at a church. When I met with the watering supervisor to check on the work, I discovered that some of the group leaders were just bossing the brothers and sisters around and urging them to do their duty, while they just twiddled their thumbs and didn't water the newcomers. They didn't try to understand the actual difficulties the brothers and sisters faced in their duties, so their guidance of work was just giving some empty speeches and enforcing the rules, rather than sharing a practical path. The supervisor and I fellowshiped with them that leading a group wasn't just telling people what to do, they had to provide practical watering for newcomers as well, so as to be able to discover the problems and difficulties existing in the work. But quite a few days after the fellowship, they still hadn't taken any real action. I looked into it and discovered a team leader Kinsley was disturbing and obstructing things. She herself didn't practice, yet was inciting the other team leaders, saying, "The church leader and the supervisor have us watering newcomers. This leaves me no time to follow up on the team's work—does that mean we don't need to do it anymore? Then what is the team leader's job?" She then said, "Do you know, this supervisor is an amateur? How can an amateur teaching professionals do the job properly?" When the supervisor inspected the team leaders' work and found problems, she spoke more severely, and Kinsley then judged that the supervisor was scolding them haughtily, and she even spread this among the brothers and sisters. Without any understanding she also judged the superior leaders to have selected someone not in accordance with principle. But in fact, the supervisor had been promoted and cultivated according to principle. Although she didn't have much experience watering

newcomers, she had good caliber, she was capable and bore a burden in her duty, and she could be cultivated. She could also spot problems and guide the work, and after some time watering newcomers she'd made some progress. But Kinsley, under the guise of "amateurs can't teach professionals," attacked the supervisor and insisted she wasn't fit for the position. She also spread rumors that the superior leaders had appointed people without principle, which made the brothers and sisters have biased opinions against the leaders and supervisor and refuse to carry out the work. This caused a disruption in those leaders' and workers' duties, and in the work of the church. Not only this, at gatherings Kinsley made use of fellowship, nominally on her understanding of herself, to disingenuously belittle and attack the leaders and supervisor. For example, she said she'd raised suggestions to the superior leaders and supervisor, but they didn't understand the work and didn't take her suggestions. Kinsley said she didn't want to persist, but in the end discovered her advice was correct. In fact, what she said wasn't the truth at all. She was intentionally vague in her fellowship, making it seem like the leadership didn't understand the work and were holding her back, refusing to take her advice, and that she was being suppressed for upholding the interests of the church, so everyone would have sympathy for her and side with her.

Kinsley always belittled and judged leaders and workers, and the brothers and sisters had reminded her of this and fellowshiped with her on it plenty of times, but she'd never repented for it at all. This isn't a matter of showing some momentary corruption, it's a problem of her nature essence. I thought of God's words about exposing such a person. God says: **"The matter of competing for status is an issue which arises often in church life and it is something that is not uncommon to see. What states, behaviors, and manifestations belong to the practice of competing for**

status? What manifestations of competing for status can be said to be part of the issue of the disruption and disturbance of God's work and the normal order of the churches? No matter what article or category we fellowship, it must pertain to what is said in article twelve, about 'the various people, events, and things that disrupt and disturb God's work and the normal order of the churches.' It must reach the degree of disruption and disturbance, and it must pertain to this nature to be worth fellowship and dissection. What manifestations of competing for status are associated with disrupting and disturbing the work of the house of God in nature? Most common is competing with church leaders for their status, which is chiefly manifested in seizing on the leaders' faults and errors to denigrate and condemn them, and purposefully exposing their revelations of corruption and the failings and shortcomings in their humanity and caliber, particularly when it comes to deviations and mistakes they have made in their work or when dealing with people. This is the most commonly seen, and most blatant, manifestation of competing with church leaders for status. In addition, regardless of how well church leaders do their work, whether or not they act according to principles, or whether or not there are issues with their humanity, they do not care about these things; they simply do not obey church leaders. Why don't they obey them? Because they also want to be a church leader, this is their ambition, their desire, and so they refuse to obey. No matter how the church leader works or handles problems, they always seize on their flaws, judge and condemn them, and even go so far as to blow things out of proportion, distort facts, and make mountains out of molehills. They do not use the standards that the house of God requires of leaders and workers to measure whether what this leader does is according to

principle, whether they are someone who is correct, whether they are someone who pursues the truth, whether they have conscience and sense. They do not make judgments according to these principles. Instead, as befits their own intentions and aims, they constantly nitpick and split hairs, finding things to hold against leaders or workers, spreading information behind their backs about the things they do that are not in line with the truth, or bringing up their shortcomings. They might say, for example, that ‘Leader so-and-so once made this mistake and was dealt with by the Above, which none of you know about—that’s how good they are at putting on an act.’ They ignore and overlook whether this leader or worker is being trained up by the house of God, and whether they are a qualified leader or worker, but simply keep on judging them, twisting the facts, and scheming against them behind their back. And to what end do they do these things? It is because they are competing for status, is it not? There is an aim to everything they say and do. They are not thinking of the church’s work, and their evaluation of leaders and workers is not based on the words of God or the truth, much less the work arrangements of God’s house or the principles that God requires of man, but on their own intentions and aims” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (14)). I learned from God’s words that if someone does not look at whether leaders and workers are right people, whether they’re suited to the principles of God’s house for cultivating people, but instead they just find fault and try to get something on them, and intentionally judge and belittle them behind their backs, trying to incite the brothers and sisters to attack and condemn them, then they are disrupting the work of the church. Such a person should be exposed and reined in, and, in serious cases, removed from the church. With regard to

Kinsley's behavior, she wasn't looking at whether the supervisor was getting results in her duty, if her work was benefiting the work of the church, or if she was worth cultivating. Kinsley just seized on the fact that the supervisor's skills were inferior to her own, and on this basis spread the idea that amateurs couldn't guide professionals. She judged and attacked, and sowed discord, and let the brothers and sisters develop prejudice against the leaders and workers, and refuse to carry out the work we arranged. This hindered our progress in watering work. This wasn't Kinsley showing momentary corruption, this was her consistent behavior. She'd already seriously disrupted church life, and wasn't fit to do her duty. I should dismiss her immediately according to principle. If at that point she still didn't repent, she should be cleansed from the church. But as I thought about dismissing Kinsley, I hesitated, thinking that she'd been a team leader for a while, and was a good actor. The brothers and sisters didn't have much discernment of her, and some looked up to her. They felt she had a burden in her duty, that she was loving and had a sense of justice. If I dismissed her as soon as I joined the church, would the brothers and sisters think I was heartless and cruel? That I was being punishing? Would they approve of my leadership after this? What's more, Kinsley's humanity was really vicious, and she had many methods of fanning the flames and sowing discord behind the scenes. If I offended her and she pointed the finger at me, and judged me among the brothers and sisters, stirring up my relationship with them, my work would get a lot harder to do. I figured I shouldn't rush to dismiss her, but first prune and deal with her, expose and dissect the essence and consequences of her actions. If she accepted it and changed, then she'd still have a chance. If she didn't, and kept judging the leaders and workers, it wouldn't be too late to replace her.

Later, our superior leader Juliette and I sought out Kinsley and several other group leaders, and fellowshiped with them on principles for selecting people in God's house, and the background of the supervisor's promotion. With regard to their behavior during this period of time, I exposed and dissected that their actions were in essence forming a faction, judging and attacking leaders and workers, and disrupting the work of the church. If they didn't change, and kept spreading rumors and disrupting work, then they'd be dismissed. A few team leaders could accept this and reflected on themselves, and said they wanted to cooperate with the supervisor and get the job done together. Only Kinsley didn't make a clear statement. To my surprise, a few days later, Kinsley said to a sister that the supervisor was an amateur leading professionals, and that the superior leaders had a problem in selecting people. That sister wasn't taken in, but instead fellowshiped with her on some principles. Seeing the sister wasn't playing along, Kinsley stopped at that. After that, she messaged a few other team leaders to rope them in and mislead them, saying, "I got defensive after the leaders' fellowship the other day, afraid I'd be cleared out. Did you guys feel the same way? I don't even dare say a word now. It's like we can't even make suggestions, can't have different opinions, and if we speak up, we'll be dismissed and kicked out of the church. Who'd dare make suggestions again?" Then she said that the poor progress of work was related to the leaders not appointing people according to principles. Not only that, she also went to a brother responsible for the work, using the excuse of seeking those principles to spread the idea that the current supervisor was unfit. That brother fellowshiped with her on the principles of selecting people in God's house and the situation of the supervisor. After that fellowship, she said she understood, that she wasn't biased against the supervisor anymore, and that she would work harmoniously with the supervisor to perform their

duties. But later, she secretly spread discontent against the leaders and workers, arguing, “The fact that all the brothers and sisters spoke up for the supervisor must be because the superior leader Juliette has forced a consensus. Juliette has power, and others fear her. I’m anxious that if I continue reporting the problem of the supervisor, she might treat me like an antichrist.” What that really meant was that Juliette was hiding the truth from the others in the church, and was suppressing reports of problems. Hearing these manifestations of Kinsley, I was shocked. I had never thought she was so slick and cunning. So many people had fellowshiped with her on principles, but she refused to accept it. She had no understanding of or repentance for her behavior of judging the leaders and workers, instead intensified her efforts in deceiving people and attacking the leaders and workers. She incited disharmony between the brothers and sisters and the leaders, constantly disrupting church work. Wasn’t she acting as a minion of Satan? I felt great regret. Why had I not dismissed her in the beginning? Why had I hesitated all those days, giving her more chances to fool people? I knew Kinsley had always belittled and judged the leaders and workers and disrupted their duties, so I should have immediately dismissed her. But I was afraid of what the others would think of me, so I wanted to first fellowship the truth and prune and deal with her, then dismiss her if she still didn’t repent. I thought this would be perfectly justifiable, and that the brothers and sisters would be convinced, and wouldn’t think ill of me. To protect my name and status, I not only didn’t keep Kinsley in check, I gave her free rein to continue disrupting the work of the church. Didn’t I have a part in her evil? Thinking over what I’d done was really tough for me. I felt I hadn’t fulfilled my responsibilities as a leader or protected the work of the church. God hated that. So I prayed, asking God to guide me in reflecting and knowing myself.

In my devotionals the next day, I saw a passage of God's words exposing antichrists that helped me better understand myself. God's words say: **"Antichrists give serious consideration to how to treat the truth principles, God's commissions, and the work of God's house, or how to deal with the things they face. They do not consider how to satisfy God's will, how to keep from damaging the interests of God's house, how to satisfy God, or how to benefit the brothers and sisters; these are not the things they consider. What do antichrists consider? Whether their own status and reputation will be affected, and whether their prestige will be lowered. If doing something according to the truth principles benefits the work of the church and the brothers and sisters, but would cause their own reputation to suffer and cause many people to realize their true stature and know what sort of nature essence they have, then they will definitely not act in accordance with the truth principles. If doing some practical work will cause more people to think highly of them, look up to them and admire them, allow them to gain even greater prestige, or enable their words to carry authority and make more people submit to them, then they will choose to do it that way; otherwise, they will never choose to disregard their own interests out of consideration for the interests of God's house or of the brothers and sisters. This is the nature essence of antichrists. Isn't it selfish and despicable?"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). God reveals that antichrists greatly cherish reputation and status, and everything they do is for that. They only do things beneficial to their name and status; if they think their interests will be harmed, they'll turn a blind eye to problems. They'd rather see the interests of the church harmed to protect their own. Wasn't my own behavior exactly like that of an antichrist? I knew well that cleansing the church was what God's house required, and God has said

many times that when an evil person disrupts the church, leaders and workers should make short work of them—exposing them, constraining them, or purging them. Kinsley’s behavior had already become disruptive to the church’s work, so I should’ve handled her promptly. But I was worried the brothers and sisters would think poorly of me, and wouldn’t support me as leader. To protect my own name and status, I had merely dealt with her and exposed her. I knew she hadn’t accepted that, but I didn’t restrain or dismiss her, so she had continued sowing discord, and disrupting the church’s work. I was willing to sacrifice the interests of the church to protect myself. I was so cunning, selfish and despicable! I hadn’t handled Kinsley according to principle, nor guided the brothers and sisters to understand the truth and develop discernment. As a result, some were misled by her and took her side, which disturbed and obstructed the church’s work. I felt so guilty, and was filled with regret. I felt like I didn’t deserve to be a leader at all. I prayed, “Oh God, a disruptive evildoer surfaced in the church, but I protected my own name and status instead of the work of the church. I’m so selfish! I don’t want to keep living in such a despicable way. I want to truly repent to You.”

Then I sought out some brothers and sisters who were familiar with Kinsley, so as to learn more about her overall behavior. While looking into it, I saw that some of them lacked discernment of her, they thought she had a sense of justice, and could protect the work of the church. Some knew the error of her ways, but thought it was just because she didn’t understand the truth principles. I fellowshiped with them on the truths related to what a sense of justice is, and what arrogance and self-righteousness are, and the difference between momentary transgression on the one hand and someone’s nature essence on the other. This helped them gain more discernment of Kinsley, and they were ready to stand up and expose her.

But when I sought out Brandon to understand Kinsley's behavior, he vehemently defended her, and shot back at me, saying, "Why do you want to investigate her? She just made some suggestions. Why are you guys condemning her? How come you leaders and workers suppress anyone with an idea, and give them a hard time? Who'd dare give suggestions? This investigation of yours makes me afraid to ever have a differing opinion. You guys seem a lot like antichrists, they don't allow different voices." I was startled to hear all this. I'd never imagined he'd have such a strong reaction and claim we were unfair to her. To begin with I fellowshiped patiently with him, but he wouldn't listen, and still believed in Kinsley's words, thinking the problem was with the leaders. I really wanted to give up then. I felt like my understanding of the truth was shallow and I lacked experience in dealing with matters like this. If I kept handling this, others might develop prejudice against me. Then I realized I was starting to consider my own interests again, so I silently prayed to God and asked Him for faith and strength. I remembered this passage of His words: **"Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; do not consider the interests of man, and give no thought to your own pride, reputation, and status. You must first consider the interests of God's house, and make them your priority. You should be considerate of God's will and begin by contemplating whether or not there have been impurities in the performance of your duty, whether you have been devoted, fulfilled your responsibilities, and given it your all, as well as whether or not you have been wholeheartedly thinking about your duty and the work of the church. You must consider these things. If you think about them frequently and figure them out, it will be easier for you to perform your duty well. If you are of poor caliber, if your experience is shallow, or if you are not**

proficient in your professional work, then there may be some mistakes or deficiencies in your work, and you may not get good results—but you will have done your best. You do not satisfy your own selfish desires or preferences. Instead, you give constant consideration to the work of the church and the interests of the house of God. Though you may not achieve good results in your duty, your heart will have been set straight; if, on top of this, you can seek the truth to solve the problems in your duty, you will be up to standard in the performance of your duty, and, at the same time, you will be able to enter into the truth reality. This is what it means to possess testimony” (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). I understood from God’s words that we can’t consider our reputation or personal gain in our duty. We must put the interests of the church first, accept God’s scrutiny, and dedicate our whole heart. That’s the only way our duty gains God’s approval. I couldn’t stop practicing the truth for fear of offending others, or for fear of them developing prejudice against me. I hadn’t handled such a matter before, but I had to at least stay true to my duty and do my best to fellowship on discernment with the brothers and sisters. Brandon had been deceived by Kinsley, and was speaking on her behalf, because she’d confused different concepts and had turned arbitrary judgment and the spreading of fallacies into “speaking the truth.” She had taken the leaders’ exposure and rebuttal of her fallacies, and their prevention of her from judging and condemning people, as “forbidding suggestions and different opinions.” These falsehoods that appear true can be really misleading. Kinsley had twisted the facts, making judgments behind the scenes that the leaders were selecting people without principles. Leaders and workers and the brothers and sisters had fellowshipped with her on the principles for selecting people—she not only refused to accept this,

she kept on twisting the facts, saying the leaders were suppressing her, not allowing her to raise suggestions, and forbidding all differing opinions. Isn't that reversing the facts and framing others? She said, "I'm afraid that I'd be kicked out of the church. And who will dare raise a suggestion again?" Those words appeared to come from the heart, but they were hiding her sinister intentions, her attacks and judgments. She wanted to confuse the brothers and sisters and rope them in to stand on her side in confrontation with the leaders, and to refuse to cooperate with the work of the leaders and workers. She was disrupting the work of the church. Brandon had no discernment and was deceived by Kinsley's remarks. I should have given him loving help and support. Through fellowship, he later gained discernment of her. He realized he hadn't sought the truth and lacked discernment, which is why he'd shielded Kinsley, standing on the side of an evildoer and speaking on her behalf. He also saw how pathetic he was without an understanding of the truth, and how susceptible to evil-doing he was. I was really happy to see him turn these things around.

Later, some co-workers and I gathered and fellowshiped with the brothers and sisters on how to discern evil people, and we dissected all of Kinsley's behavior. Everyone gained discernment over her, and we voted, nearly unanimously, to remove her from the church. During the vote, they noted some of the knowledge they had gained. They said things like, "Kinsley was particularly adept at fabricating lies and inverting the truth, and under the guise of protecting the interests of the church she spread her biases against the leaders and workers everywhere. This turned the church's work into a huge mess. No matter how leaders exposed and pruned and dealt with her, she didn't remotely regret this or repent. She has an evil essence." Others said, "Kinsley appeared very gentle, but her words were misleading, sinister and malicious. If it were not for this fellowship and

dissection, I'd still lack discernment of her. I've seen how crucial it is to understand the truth and have discernment of others." Some said they'd been misled by her before, and thought she was protecting the work of the church, unaware she was doing so much evil in secret. They had no discernment of her, so they stood by her side and said things that didn't accord with the truth. They needed to reflect and repent. They also saw that God's righteous disposition tolerates no offense—evildoers who disrupt the work of the church sooner or later will be revealed and cast out. Hearing the fellowship of my brothers and sisters made me very happy.

This experience taught me that, when an evildoer appears in the church and disturbs and disrupts the work of the church, if leaders and workers do not practice the truth and handle them according to principles, instead protecting their personal interests, that's essentially letting Satan sabotage the work of the church, acting as its minion, doing evil and opposing God. Only by clearing the evildoers out of the church right away, and by leading the brothers and sisters to learn truth and gain discernment, can the work of the church be protected, and the responsibilities of a leader or worker be fulfilled.

76. The Lessons I Learned From Being Dismissed

By Owen, Spain

In 2018, I was in charge of video work. Sometimes several video tasks would come in at the same time, and they needed to be assigned to the right people for production. Every time, I would think quickly about how to allocate the work, but when I told my partnered brother and sister about my allocation plan, they always added addendums and improvements to my plan. Sometimes, they would point out where I was not thinking comprehensively, and I felt a little embarrassed when they had lots of suggestions. The way they pointed out my problems always made me feel as if my work ability wasn't very good. It made me wonder what others thought of me as a team leader. Furthermore, one of my two partners had outstanding work ability. The other had a lot of professional experience and had also believed in God for a long time. Both of them considered problems quite comprehensively and weren't giving me a chance to shine. I thought about how in time, my brothers and sisters may feel that aside from making a few videos, as a team leader, I wasn't much use to the group's work. The more I thought like this, the worse I felt, and I began to wonder, "If I could do the things my partners can't take care of a little more, and a little better, then won't I be able to stand out? My professional skills are fairly good in the group, and the brothers and sisters say I have good life entry, so if I spend more time resolving the states of my brothers and sisters, and share more of my professional knowledge, then they will definitely look up to me." So, regardless of whether they needed it or had problems, I always went to talk with them about their states and fellowship with them. Also, I often looked up technical information and summarized professional

techniques to share with them. Even when it delayed my video production work, I insisted on doing these things. I felt paying this price was worth it.

Because my intentions were wrong, I couldn't grasp crucial work, the effectiveness of my work declined noticeably, and problems kept cropping up. Once, I made a basic mistake that not even a novice would likely make, which made me feel very ashamed. I thought, "It's laughable that as a team leader, I made such a basic mistake. If I don't do something to restore my image, how will I be able to go on as a team leader?" After that, to avoid being looked down upon, I buried myself in my work. I didn't ask at all about the progress of work in the group, and every time I received a task, I'd just hastily assign it to the brothers and sisters and be done with it. This led to several times where I delayed the assignment of tasks because I didn't follow up on work in time. I was so very numb at that time. When these things happened, I didn't reflect on myself. Later, in accordance with work requirements, my partners and I trained several new team members. I thought Lauren, who I was training, had a stronger foundation than the others, and that if I could quickly cultivate her, I could prove that my ability to cultivate people was good. However, after a period of actual contact with her, I found that her caliber was average and that she progressed quite slowly. After that, I wasn't as careful or thoughtful when I taught her. When she had questions, I muddled through the answer. Sometimes, when she didn't understand my answers, it even felt like too much trouble to explain. As a result, after some time passed, she not only didn't make progress, but it became more difficult for her to perform her duty. Later, my partner suggested that she teach Lauren techniques with me, and I thought, "Now you're just attacking my image. At any rate, I'm team leader. Do you think I need your help to teach Lauren? That would make me look completely incapable, wouldn't it?" But I realized my training was ineffective, so I

couldn't outright deny her. All I could do was reluctantly agree. To recoup some dignity, I wanted to find other opportunities to prove myself. Once, another group had some professional difficulties and asked me for help. I thought, "This is a rare opportunity. If I can take care of this problem properly, the brothers and sisters will definitely look up to me, and my good reputation might even spread to other groups too." But once I actually looked into the situation, I found out it would take a lot of time and effort to deal with the problem. At the time, I already had plenty of problems in my own work that urgently needed solving, and the other group's problem wasn't all that urgent. I thought maybe I should just put aside their problem for now. But I thought this was a good chance for me to restore my image, so I couldn't let it slip away. Besides, my partners could handle work in our group. They could do without me this time. Thinking this, I went ahead with complete confidence.

I spent all my time thinking about how to make others look up to me, so I wasn't attentive to the group's work at all, which caused video production work to move very slowly. Also, because I didn't follow up on the work promptly, there was a backlog of tasks, and the effectiveness of work declined noticeably. I was one of the main supervisors, yet I didn't know how to resolve these problems, and my state grew worse and worse. Although I was busy every day, I still didn't produce good results. My leader dealt with me after learning about this situation, saying I was focusing on reputation and status in my duty and that I wasn't resolving the specific problems in our work. After that, although I made some outward changes, I never genuinely tried to know myself, and when things happened, I still tried to protect my reputation and status first. Later, Lauren was transferred to another duty because she couldn't produce videos independently. Before she left, she summarized some of the problems she

had had from her time in this duty. She mentioned that when I taught her professional skills, she had many difficulties she couldn't resolve, and that her professional skills only improved once another sister started teaching her. I was very angry when I saw what she had written. I thought, "If my leader or co-workers read what she has said, what would they think? Surely they'll think I can't do anything." To protect my status and image, I went to my leader to report on Lauren's problems, deliberately belittled her caliber, exaggerated how she muddled through her duties and often argued back, and I took pains to stress the deficiencies in her humanity. I was surprised when my leader said, "If that's true, it might not be appropriate to let her water newcomers." I never imagined my words could lead to such a consequence. If Lauren wasn't able to water newcomers because of what I said, then I would truly be doing evil. I wanted to explain it to my leader, but I thought of how I already had a bad image in everyone's mind. If I was honest about this, then beyond just appearing useless in my work, people would think I had bad humanity. So, I said ambiguously to the leader, "You should look into it." Later, after investigating and verifying things, the leader discovered Lauren's problems weren't as serious as I had claimed and didn't transfer her.

Because I stubbornly pursued reputation and status, and because I refused to change, based on my brothers' and sisters' evaluations of me, my leader said I was irresponsible in my duty, didn't do practical work, only did things to make myself look good, and so dismissed me for these things. I couldn't figure it out. I was so busy with my duty every day, and this was how things turned out. If my brothers and sisters found out the reason I was dismissed, they would definitely say I had bad humanity and that I wasn't someone who pursues the truth. How would I face everyone in the future? Thinking of this, I felt an inexpressible sadness, but I knew that no matter

what, before anything else, I had to obey. I had taken this path, and I had no one but myself to blame. During that time, I wanted to reflect on my problems, so I prayed to God and asked Him to guide me in knowing myself.

Later, I read some of God's words and found a passage that described my state perfectly. Almighty God says: **“Antichrists live each day only for reputation and status, they live only to revel in the trappings of status, this is all they think about. Even when they do occasionally suffer some minor hardship or pay some trivial price, this is for the sake of obtaining status and reputation. Pursuing status, holding power, and having an easy life are major things that antichrists always scheme for once they believe in God, and they don't give up until they achieve their goals. If their evil deeds are ever exposed, they panic, as if the sky is about to fall on them. They can't eat or sleep, and they seem to be in a trance, as if they are suffering from depression. When people ask them what was wrong, they make up lies and say, ‘Yesterday I was so busy that I didn't sleep all night, so I'm very tired.’ But actually, none of this is true, it is all deception. They feel this way because they are constantly pondering, ‘The bad things I did have been exposed, so how can I restore my reputation and status? What means can I use to redeem myself? What tone can I use with everyone to explain this? What can I say to keep people from seeing through me?’ For a long time, they can't figure out what to do, and so they are depressed. Sometimes their eyes stare blankly at a single spot, and no one knows what they are looking at. The issue makes them rack their brains, exhaust every train of thought, and not want to eat or drink. Despite this, they still put on the appearance of caring about church work, and ask people, ‘How is the gospel work going? How effectively is it being preached? Have the**

brothers and sisters gained any life entry recently? Has anyone been causing any disruptions or disturbances?’ These inquiries of theirs about the church’s work are meant as a show for others. If they did learn of problems, they would have no way to resolve them, so their questions are a mere formality that others are liable to see as care for the church’s work. If someone should make a report of the church’s problems for them to resolve, they would just shake their heads. No scheme would avail them, and though they would wish to disguise themselves, they could not, and they would risk being exposed and revealed. This is the biggest problem antichrists face in their entire lives. ... Anywhere antichrists hold power, no matter the scope of their influence, even if it is just one group, they will influence the work of God’s house and the life entry of a portion of God’s chosen people. If they hold power in a church, church work and God’s will are hindered there. Why can’t the work arrangements of God’s house be implemented in certain churches? It is because antichrists hold power in these churches. Anyone who is an antichrist will not sincerely expend for God, the performance of their duties will just be a matter of formalities and going through the motions. They will not do real work even if they are leaders or workers, and they will only speak and act for the sake of fame, gain, and status, without protecting the work of the church at all. So, what do antichrists do all day? They busy themselves with putting on performances and showing off. They only do things involving their own fame, gain, and status. They are busy misleading others, drawing people in, and when they have amassed their strength, they will go on to control more churches. They wish only to reign as kings and turn the church into their independent kingdom. They wish only to be the great leader, to have complete, unilateral authority, to

control more churches. They don't care in the slightest about anything else. They don't concern themselves with the work of the church, or the life entry of God's chosen people, much less do they care about whether God's will is carried out. They are only concerned with when they can independently hold power, control God's chosen people, and stand on an equal footing with God. The desires and ambitions of antichrists are enormous indeed! No matter how hard-working antichrists appear to be, they are only busy with their own endeavors, doing what they like to do, and with things related to their own fame, gain, and status. They don't even think about their responsibilities or the duty they should be performing, and they do nothing proper at all. This is the sort of thing antichrists are—they are devils and Satans, who disrupt and disturb God's work" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). God's word revealed that antichrists live only for reputation and status and never do any practical work whatsoever. To stop others from discerning them and seeing through them, they rack their brains to find ways to maintain their position, and they are happy to delay the work of the church to do so. I reflected on all my actions and behavior since becoming a team leader, and I saw that I had behaved the same as an antichrist. When I saw that my partners saw issues more comprehensively, and when they always pointed out the deficiencies in my work, I feared my brothers and sisters would think I had poor caliber and was incompetent in my work, so I tried to take every available opportunity to recoup my dignity. I spent time organizing information on professional skills so that everyone could see I bore a burden and understood these things. I even put aside and ignored urgent problems in my group that needed to be solved and instead spent my time solving the problem for another group to show off. After I made a mistake in my video, I feared my brothers and sisters would say my skills were

poor, so I put the work of the group aside and buried myself in my own production tasks, hoping to do the tasks well enough to prove that I had ability. I also used cultivating others as a chance to prove myself, but when I found out Lauren wasn't growing fast enough to show my own abilities, I began to act in a cold and perfunctory manner toward her, which made it impossible for her to master the skills. I only cared about pursuing reputation and status and doing things that benefited me, not doing actual work. I caused delays and harm to the work of the church. Wasn't this behavior of mine exactly the same as that of an antichrist? Even after Lauren was transferred from her duty, I didn't feel any guilt, and because she pointed out my shortcomings and deficiencies, I tried to justify and defend myself to protect my reputation and status, belittling and judging her, and almost causing her to be transferred again. I had been truly vicious, selfish, and despicable! Thinking of all the harm I caused to the work of the church and to Lauren, I felt especially miserable. These actions had tainted my path of belief in God! Later, I prayed to God to confess and repent.

One day, I read a passage of God's word: **"When God asks that people put aside fame, gain, and status, it is not that He is depriving people of the right to choose; rather, it is because, while pursuing fame, gain, and status, people disrupt and disturb the work of the church and the life entry of God's chosen people, and can even have an influence on more people's eating and drinking God's words, understanding the truth, and thus achieving God's salvation. This is an indisputable fact. When people pursue their own fame, gain, and status, it is certain that they will not pursue the truth and that they will not faithfully fulfill their duty. They will only speak and act for the sake of fame, gain, and status, and all the work they do, without the least exception, is for those things' sake. To behave and act in such a way is, without question, to**

walk the path of antichrists; it is a disruption and disturbance of God's work, and all its various consequences are hindering the spread of the kingdom gospel and the free flow of God's will within the church. So, one may say with certainty that the path walked by those who pursue fame, gain, and status is the path of resistance against God. It is intentional resistance against Him, naysaying Him—it is to cooperate with Satan in resisting God and standing in opposition to Him. This is the nature of people's pursuit of fame, gain, and status. The problem with people pursuing their own interests is that the goals they pursue are the goals of Satan—they are goals that are wicked and unjust. When people pursue personal interests such as fame, gain, and status, they unwittingly become a tool of Satan, they become an outlet for Satan, and, moreover, they become an embodiment of Satan. They play a negative role in the church; toward the work of the church, and toward the normal church life and normal pursuit of God's chosen people, the effect they have is to disturb and impair; they have an **adverse and negative effect**" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)). After I read God's word, I finally realized that when I pursued status and protected my personal interests, in essence, I was acting as Satan's servant and disrupting the work of the church. I knew my work ability and professional skills weren't as good as my partners. If I had been able to humbly learn from them and cooperate harmoniously with them, then not only would I have made some progress in my skills, I would have also been able to understand some truth principles. This would have been a good thing for me. But I didn't know what was good for me. The title of "team leader" made me completely lose my head. I didn't spend my time doing my actual duty or expend effort on my main work. Instead, I contrived ways to disguise myself and show off to make others admire me. I occupied the

position of team leader without actually doing practical work, and I hindered and delayed the progress of our work. God hates and detests the things I did. My dismissal showed God's righteous disposition and God's protection for me. Thinking of the harm I caused to the work of the church, I felt especially guilty. I prayed to God, "God, my desire for status is too strong! Without this revelation, I don't know how long I would remain numb. I want to use this failure to properly reflect on myself and resolve my problem."

Later, as I sought the path of practice, I read two passages of God's words: **"Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; do not consider the interests of man, and give no thought to your own pride, reputation, and status. You must first consider the interests of God's house, and make them your priority. You should be considerate of God's will and begin by contemplating whether or not there have been impurities in the performance of your duty, whether you have been devoted, fulfilled your responsibilities, and given it your all, as well as whether or not you have been wholeheartedly thinking about your duty and the work of the church. You must consider these things. If you think about them frequently and figure them out, it will be easier for you to perform your duty well"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). **"If people only pursue prestige, profit, and status—if they only pursue their own interests—then they will never gain the truth and life, and ultimately, they will be the ones who suffer a loss. God saves those who pursue the truth. If you do not accept the truth, and if you are incapable of reflecting upon and knowing your own corrupt disposition, then you will not truly repent, and you will have no life entry. Accepting the**

truth and knowing yourself is the path to growth in life and to attaining salvation, it is the chance for you to come before God to accept His scrutiny, judgment, and chastisement, and to gain the truth and life. If you give up on pursuing the truth for the sake of pursuing reputation and status and your own interests, this is tantamount to giving up on the opportunity to accept God's judgment and chastisement, and to attain salvation. You are choosing prestige, profit, and status and your own interests, but what you are giving up is the truth, and what you are losing is the life, and the chance to be saved. Which means more? If you choose your own interests and give up on the truth, is this not foolish? To put it in vernacular terms, this is suffering a great loss for the sake of a small advantage. Prestige, profit, status, money, and interests are all temporary, they are all ephemeral, whereas the truth and life are eternal and immutable. If people resolve the corrupt dispositions that cause them to pursue prestige, profit, and status, then they have hope of attaining salvation. Moreover, the truths that people gain are eternal; Satan cannot take these truths away from people, nor can anyone else. You relinquish your interests but what you gain are the truth and salvation; these results are yours, and you gain them for yourself. If people choose to practice the truth, then even though they have lost their interests, they are gaining God's salvation and eternal life. Those people are the smartest ones. If people give up the truth for the sake of their interests, then they lose the life and God's salvation; those people are the most foolish ones" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Knowing One's Disposition Is the Foundation of Changing It). God's word made me understand that in our duty, we must forsake our incorrect intentions and desires. Instead of our reputation and status, we must always put the interests of the church first in everything. Only practicing like this

accords with God's will, and this is the bare minimum that a person with conscience and reason should do. Recognizing these things, I consciously forsook my flesh, no longer paid attention to reputation and status, and focused on the proper performance of my duty. Aside from completing my own production tasks, I also wrote down the frequent problems and deviations in my own and others' work, and brought them before the team leaders and my brothers and sisters to discuss and find solutions. Practicing like this benefited everyone, and we were able to make progress in our professional skills. When I saw this result, I was very grateful to God. This was the result of everyone performing their duties with one heart and one mind. In the past, I always tried to protect my reputation and status. I always did things to improve my image and show off in my duty, I didn't solve any practical problems, and all I left behind were transgressions. But once I stopped thinking about my reputation and status, and instead took the initiative to reveal the shortcomings and mistakes in the work, not only did my brothers and sisters not look down on me, they discussed and coordinated with me, and we found a better way to do our duty. Only then did I see how foolish I was to disguise myself and show off. If I had practiced this way earlier, I wouldn't have delayed the work.

Some time later, my leader arranged for me a part-time job watering newcomers. She said that because some newcomers still had not set down a foundation upon the true way, they were becoming passive, weak, and not attending gatherings when they faced difficulties or when pastors disturbed them, and so they urgently needed support through watering. Although I knew this duty was very important, I was still a little reluctant. This was mostly because it was a part-time job, so no matter how well I did, no one in our group would know. So I thought I might as well spend more time on my main work. I could spend my spare time improving my professional

techniques. If I became more effective in my main work, my brothers and sisters would look up to me. So for that reason, I didn't want to work too hard on watering newcomers. But over the next few days, I felt that my state was a little off, so I opened up and fellowshiped with my brothers and sisters, and it was then I realized I was still pursuing reputation and status. I read in God's word: **"Though most people say they happily pursue the truth, when it comes to putting it into practice or paying a price for it, some people just give up. This is betrayal in essence. The more crucial a moment is, the more you are needed to give up fleshly interests and cast aside vanity and pride; if you are unable to do so, you cannot gain the truth, and it shows that you are not obedient toward God. If the more crucial a moment is, the more able people are to submit and let go of their self-interests, vanity, and pride, and perform their duties properly, only then will they be remembered by God. Those are all good deeds! Irrespective of what duty people perform, or what they do, which is more important—their vanity and pride, or God's glory? Which should people choose? (God's glory.) Which are more important—your responsibilities, or your own interests? Fulfilling your responsibilities is what is most important, and you are duty-bound to them"** (God's Fellowship). After reading God's word, I saw clearly that no matter whether I was looked up to, this was my duty, which meant it was my responsibility and a commission from God. I should accept it and treat it sincerely. I couldn't keep calculating for the sake of my reputation and status anymore. Personnel were needed to do watering work, and if I didn't want to do this duty just because it didn't offer a chance to show off, was I not being unconscionable and unreasonable? That evening, I heard a hymn of God's word titled **"Are You Willing to Give God the Love in Your Heart?"** The lyrics were, **"God cherishes the love of every man. Toward**

all who love Him, His blessings are redoubled, for man's love is so hard to come by, and there is so little of it" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (3)). I was very moved. The more the work of the church needs to be protected, the more I should fulfill my duty and responsibility. I couldn't disappoint God again. Although I had many deficiencies as I watered the newcomers and encountered many difficulties, when I set my motives right and relied on God, I saw God's guidance, and before long some of the newcomers I was watering were able to attend gatherings normally.

Before long, the church placed me in charge of another task. This time, no matter how busy I was with my work, I kept track of the group's progress and assigned tasks in a timely manner. For a while I also went over our work together with the brothers and sisters to resolve their difficulties, and for things I didn't understand, I found people with good skills to help us solve them. Gradually, the results of the work significantly improved. I knew this was all thanks to God's guidance and blessings. In the past, I only cared about reputation and status. Now I can somewhat let go of the pursuit of status, consciously protect the work of the church, and perform my duty in a down-to-earth manner. These are the results achieved by God's words. Thanks be to God!

77. Craving Comfort Gets You Nothing

By Kristin, Sweden

Last July, I was put in charge of video work. At the start, I often looked into the problems and difficulties my brothers and sisters were having in performing their duties, and sought the truth with them to find solutions. After some time passed, there was an obvious improvement in the results of work. I thought, “Now that work is steadily improving, there should be no major problems. Even if a problem occurs, it won’t affect our work results, and we’ll have time to solve it.” Seeing that everyone was proactive in their duties and could pay a price, I thought I didn’t need to worry too much. During that period, following up on everything often meant going to bed late, and sometimes I was too busy to eat on time. I felt pretty tired, and I hadn’t been in the best health, so I thought I should take things easy. After that, I started to relax about work, and I wasn’t as diligent in keeping track of it. Sometimes, I only asked perfunctorily, I seldom looked into the details of my brothers’ and sisters’ duties, and I didn’t think about how to further improve the results of our work.

Soon, several videos we produced had problems and had to be redone, which directly affected the progress of work. When I saw this situation, I was very worried. I also realized that it didn’t happen by accident, and that there were lessons for me to learn, so I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me in understanding His will. After I prayed, I asked the team leader why we were having these problems. The team leader said, “Some brothers and sisters sought quick success and performed their duties without principles. They only focused on progress, not quality. Another reason is that I haven’t followed up on the work, and didn’t discover the problems in time.” This made me think angrily, “How many times have I told you about these

problems? Why are they still happening?” I wanted to rebuke the team leader, but then I thought, “Don’t I have the same problem as the team leader? After all, I didn’t follow up either.” So, I swallowed my words. Then, I quickly checked the videos everyone made during this period and found that some people hadn’t made progress in their duties, and some even regressed. These were such obvious problems, how had I not found them before? I was clearly aware this was due to me not doing practical work. I felt remorse, so I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me in reflecting and knowing myself.

The next day, in my devotionals, I read a passage of God’s word: **“If you are not assiduous in reading God’s words, and you do not understand the truth, then you cannot reflect on yourself; you will merely be satisfied with making a token effort and committing no evils or transgressions, and use this as capital. You will pass each day in a muddle, live in a state of confusion, merely do things on schedule, never use your heart to reflect on yourself or put effort into knowing yourself; you will always be cursory and slapdash. In this way, you will never perform your duty to an acceptable standard. To put all your effort into something, you must first put all your heart into it; only when you first put all your heart into something can you put all your effort into it, and do your best. Today, there are those who have begun to be assiduous in performing their duty, they have begun to think about how to properly carry out the duty of a created being in order to satisfy God’s heart. They are not negative and lazy, they do not passively wait for the Above to issue orders, but take some initiative. Judging by your performance of your duty, you are a little more effective than before, and although it is still below standard, there has been a little growth—which is good. But you must not be satisfied with**

the status quo, you must keep searching, keep growing—only then will you perform your duty better, and reach an acceptable standard. However, when some people perform their duty, they never pull out all the stops and give it their all, they only give 50 to 60 percent of their effort, and just make do until what they are doing is done. They can never maintain a state of normalcy: When there's no one to keep an eye on them or offer support, they slacken off and lose heart; when there's someone to fellowship the truth, they perk up, but if the truth isn't fellowshiped to them for a while, they become indifferent. What is the problem when they always go back and forth like this? This is how people are when they haven't gained the truth, they all live by passion, which is incredibly difficult to maintain: They must have someone preach and fellowship to them every day; once there is no one to water and provide for them, and no one to support them, their hearts go cold again, they slacken once more. And when their hearts slacken, they become less effective in their duty; if they work harder, effectiveness increases, their results in performing their duties are better, and they gain more. Is this your experience? You might say, 'Why do we always have trouble performing our duty? When these problems are solved, we are invigorated; when they aren't, we grow indifferent. When there is some outcome when we perform our duty, when God praises us for our growth, we are delighted, and we feel that we have finally grown up, but before long, when we encounter a difficulty, we become negative again—why is our state always inconsistent?' In fact, the main reasons are that you understand too few truths, lack depth in experiences and entry, you still do not understand many truths, you lack will, and are satisfied with just being able to perform your duty. If you do not understand the truth, how can you perform your duty

adequately? In fact, what God asks of people is all attainable by people; as long as you engage your conscience, and are able to follow your conscience in performing your duty, then it will be easy to accept the truth—and if you can accept the truth, you can perform your duty adequately. You must think in this way: ‘Believing in God during these years, eating and drinking God’s words during these years, I have gained a huge amount, and God has bestowed great graces and blessings upon me. I live in God’s hands, I live under His dominion and sovereignty, and He has given me this breath, so I should engage my mind, and strive to perform my duty with all my strength—this is what’s key.’ People must have a will; only those who have a will can truly strive for the truth, and only once they have understood the truth can they perform their duty properly, and satisfy God, and bring shame upon Satan. If you have this kind of sincerity, and do not plan for your own sake, but only to gain the truth and perform your duty properly, then your performance of your duty will become normal, and will remain constant throughout; no matter what circumstances you encounter, you will be able to persist in performing your duty. Regardless of who may come to mislead or disturb you, and no matter whether your mood is good or bad, you will still be able to perform your duty normally. In this way, God can set His mind at rest about you, and the Holy Spirit will be able to enlighten you in understanding the truth principles, and guide you in entering the truth reality, and as a result, your performance of your duty will be sure to be up to standard. As long as you sincerely expend for God, do your duty in a down-to-earth way, and not act in a slippery way or play tricks, you will pass muster with God. God observes people’s minds, thoughts, and motives. If your heart longs for the truth and you can seek the truth,

God will enlighten and illuminate you” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Believing in God, What Is Most Important Is to Practice and Experience His Words). After contemplating God’s word, I reflected on myself and realized I had achieved some results in my duty recently, so I began to feel self-satisfied and started to consider my flesh. I was tired after being busy for so long, so I thought I should be kinder to myself, and I began to relax and slack off in my duty. I took a hands-off approach and failed to learn about how others were performing their duties in a timely manner. Although I knew there were still some problems to be solved in our work, I felt no urgency. I thought it was fine as long as it didn’t affect our current results. Everyone tends to muddle through and slack off in their duties, but despite that, I didn’t follow up, I muddled through my duty, and I was inattentive and irresponsible. How could problems not appear in the work? The church had given me the chance to practice and had allowed me to be a supervisor in the hope that I could be attentive and responsible in my duty, that I would spare no effort in my duty, and fulfill my responsibilities. This is the only way to make progress. But I treated my duty as if it was a job, and I was working for someone else. I took every chance to worry less and contribute less. I felt no sense of worry or urgency. I never thought about how to do things better or achieve the best results. I only considered how I could suffer less and not be tired. I wasn’t considerate of God’s will at all. It was then that I realized my attitude toward performing my duty was wrong and I was playing games with God.

During a gathering, I saw a passage of God’s word revealing false leaders that affected me deeply. God’s words say: **“Because false leaders do not understand the status of the work’s progress, they are incapable of promptly identifying—much less solving—problems that arise in it, which often leads to repeated delays. In certain work, because people**

have no grasp of the principles and there is no one suitable to be responsible for it or preside over it, those carrying out the work are often in a state of negativity, passivity, and waiting, which severely affects the progress of the work. If the leader had fulfilled their responsibilities—if they had presided over the work, pushed it forward, supervised it, and found someone who understands that field to guide the project, then the work would have progressed faster rather than suffering repeated delays. For leaders, then, it is vital to understand and grasp the actual situation of the work. Of course, it is also very necessary for leaders to understand and grasp how the work is progressing, as progress relates to the efficiency of the work and the results it's supposed to achieve. If leaders and workers do not have a grasp on how the church's work is progressing, and they do not follow up on or supervise things, then the progress of the church's work is bound to be slow. This is due to the fact that the majority of people carrying out duties are real slackers, do not have a sense of burden, are often negative and passive, and are perfunctory. If there is nobody with a sense of burden and work capabilities specifically taking responsibility for the work, learning about the progress of the work in a timely manner, and directing, supervising, disciplining, and dealing with personnel who perform duties, then naturally, the level of work efficiency is going to be very low and the results of the work are going to be lacking. If leaders and workers can't even see this clearly, they are foolish and blind. And so, leaders and workers must promptly look into, keep track of, and familiarize themselves with the progress of work, look into what problems people performing duties have that need to be resolved, and understand which problems should be resolved in order to achieve better results. These things are all very crucial, a

person acting as a leader must be clear on these things. To do your duty well, you must not be like a false leader, who does some superficial work and then thinks they've done their duty well. False leaders are careless and slapdash in their work, they have no sense of responsibility, they don't solve problems when they arise, and no matter what work they're doing, they only skim the surface of it. They are perfunctory; they speak fine but empty words, spout doctrines, and just go through the motions in their work. In general, this is the way false leaders work. Although, in comparison to antichrists, false leaders do nothing overtly wicked and are not deliberately doing evil, when you look at the effectiveness of their work, it is fair to define them as being careless and perfunctory, as not bearing a burden, as having no sense of responsibility or devotion toward their work" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (4)). After reading God's words, I felt very guilty. Wasn't my behavior the same as a false leader? I was lazy and indulgent of my flesh, and I didn't follow up or monitor work, which seriously affected the overall progress and results of our work. My imaginings told me that work was handled well and there weren't many problems, but actually, there were still many problems to solve. Because I didn't bear a burden and was irresponsible, I had been blind to all of our problems. Through reflection, I also realized I held a mistaken view. When I saw my brothers and sisters proactive and making progress in their duties, I thought everyone was very motivated in their duties and didn't need to be monitored. God's word revealed long ago that people have inertia and that all their corrupt dispositions are deep-rooted. Before people gain the truth, and before their dispositions change, they always indulge the flesh and crave ease, they muddle through and use cunning and tricks in their duties, and sometimes they act on their own

ideas and don't practice according to principles. I was no exception. Without God's judgment and chastisement, and without the reminders and supervision of our brothers and sisters, we can easily slack off, and problems are likely to appear in our duties. So, I need to follow up and supervise work, as well as quickly discover and resolve problems and deviations in our duties for work to proceed smoothly. But I didn't understand people's corrupt nature or view people and things by God's word. I simply relied on my own imaginings, didn't check or follow up on work, didn't resolve problems in time, yet wished to get good results. This was a manifestation of a false leader not doing practical work. Although I did no obvious evil, my irresponsibility impacted and delayed work, and that loss was irreparable. When I realized these things, I opened up and fellowshiped with my brothers and sisters about my state. I also pointed out how everyone took their duties too lightly and failed to seek progress in their duties, and we sought solutions together. After that, I was a little more serious in my duty. Whenever I finished work, I'd contemplate whether there was any room for improvement. I often followed up on and looked into work, and there were some improvements in our results.

Soon after, we encountered a problem in making videos, and the team leader asked me if I had any good methods or suggestions. I didn't know how to answer, so I said, "I haven't come up with a good solution yet, so let's keep thinking about it." But after that, I didn't promptly seek out a resolution to the problem because I knew that breaking through this difficulty wasn't something that could be achieved by simply speaking a few words. I would have to look up information and research, and this would take a lot of time and effort, and I would need to constantly try things and evaluate results. Whether I would succeed in the end is hard to say. If it didn't work, wouldn't all my effort be wasted? The more I thought about it,

the more it felt like a tedious chore. I thought, “Forget it, things are fine as they are. Our work results are good for the moment, so there’s no rush to solve this.” And then I put the problem aside. But I felt a little uneasy. It wasn’t that I had no way to solve it. All I had to do was pay a little more price. The team leader then said, “The brothers and sisters are having difficulties, and we have to solve them.” The team leader’s reminder made me reflect, “As the supervisor, shouldn’t I take the lead in handling difficulties and solving people’s problems? But when I see difficulties, I avoid them, and I have no sense of responsibility.” I felt guilty, so I prayed to God, “God, when I face difficulties in work, I never want to work hard and always consider my fleshly interests. I know this is not in line with Your will. Please guide me in reflecting on myself and changing my incorrect state.”

During my devotionals, I wondered about why I always considered my flesh in my duty and why I couldn’t pay a price to do practical work. One day, I read two passages of God’s words. Almighty God says: **“What is Satan’s poison? How can it be expressed? For example, if you ask, ‘How should people live? What should people live for?’ people will answer, ‘Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.’ This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan’s philosophy and logic have become people’s lives. No matter what people pursue, they do so for themselves—and so they live only for themselves. ‘Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost’—this is the life philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words have already become the nature of corrupt mankind and they are the true portrait of corrupt mankind’s satanic nature. This satanic nature has already become the basis for corrupt mankind’s existence. For several thousand years, corrupt mankind has lived by**

this venom of Satan, right up to the present day” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter). **“Man’s flesh is like the snake: Its substance is to harm their lives—and when it completely gets its own way, your life becomes forfeit. The flesh belongs to Satan. Within it are extravagant desires, it thinks only for itself, it wants to enjoy comfort and revel in leisure, wallowing in sloth and idleness, and having satisfied it to a certain point you will ultimately be eaten up by it. Which is to say, if you satisfy it this time, next time it will come asking for more. It always has extravagant desires and new demands, and takes advantage of your pandering to the flesh to make you cherish it even more and live among its comforts—and if you do not overcome it, you will ultimately ruin yourself. Whether you can gain life before God and what your ultimate end will be, depend on how you carry out your rebellion against the flesh. God has saved you and chosen you and predestined you, yet if today you are unwilling to satisfy Him, you are unwilling to put the truth into practice, you are unwilling to rebel against your own flesh with a genuine God-loving heart, ultimately you will ruin yourself, and will thus endure extreme pain. If you always pander to the flesh, Satan will gradually swallow you up, and leave you without life, or the touch of the Spirit, until the day comes when you are completely dark inside. When you live in darkness, you will have been taken captive by Satan, you will no longer have God in your heart, and at that time you will deny God’s existence and leave Him”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). After reading God’s words, I saw how dangerous my state was, I lived by the satanic philosophy “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.” I was especially selfish, and no matter what happened, I always considered my own fleshly interests first. When I encountered a problem

that needed to be solved in my duty, I never thought about how to benefit the work of the church. I was always concerned for my flesh, and always wanted to suffer less and pay less of a price. Actually, for some problems, as long as I paid a price and took a little time to study and figure them out, I could solve them, but because I cared for my flesh too much and was unwilling to suffer, I felt that professional research was too much mental effort. As a result, the problem was never solved, and the work never improved. God's word reveals that people's flesh essentially belongs to Satan, and the flesh always has many desires and demands. The more we satisfy it, the greater its desire, and when there is a conflict between our fleshly interests and our duties, if we always crave comfort, we will follow the flesh, and put the work of the church aside. This satisfies the flesh, but harms the church's work, makes us fall into darkness, and damages our lives. The consequences of indulging the flesh and craving comfort are serious. I couldn't see the essence of the flesh, and I always craved comfort. I considered fleshly enjoyment more important than anything. Weren't my pursuits and views the same as those of unbelievers? Unbelievers often say "be kind to yourself," which is to say, don't let your flesh suffer, and satisfy all the desires and demands of the flesh. They live only for the flesh, they don't understand the value and meaning of human life at all, and they don't have right direction and purpose in life. They pass their lives in emptiness, living entirely in vain. Is there any meaning in living this way? Some people in the church always crave fleshly pleasure, don't pursue the truth, neglect their duties, play tricks, and slack off, which seriously harms the work of the church, and in the end, they are dismissed and cast out. Then I thought about myself. I had believed in God for years, but my views hadn't changed at all. I valued my fleshly interests more than the truth. I only craved comfort, and I merely went through the motions to get by in my

duty. If this continued, wouldn't I also be rejected and cast out by God? When I realized this, I felt very afraid. I could no longer be considerate of my flesh. I wanted to earnestly perform my duty and fulfill my responsibilities.

One day, I read God's words and found a path of practice. God's words say: **"People who truly believe in God perform their duties willingly, without calculating their own gains and losses. No matter whether you are someone who pursues the truth, you must rely on your conscience and reason and really make an effort when you perform your duty. What does it mean to really make an effort? If you are merely satisfied with making some token effort, and suffering a little physical hardship, but you do not take your duty seriously at all or seek the truth principles, then this is nothing more than being careless and perfunctory—it is not really making an effort. The key to making an effort is putting your heart into it, fearing God in your heart, being mindful of God's will, being terrified of disobeying God and hurting God, and suffering any hardship in order to perform your duty well and satisfy God: If you have a God-loving heart in this way, you will be able to perform your duty properly. If there is no fear of God in your heart, you will have no burden when you perform your duty, will have no interest in it, and will inevitably be careless and perfunctory, and go through the motions, without producing any real effect—which is not performing a duty. If you truly have a sense of burden, and feel like performing your duty is your personal responsibility, and that if you don't, you are not fit to live, and are a beast, that only if you perform your duty properly are you worthy of being called a human being, and can face your own conscience—if you have this sense of burden when you perform your duty—then you will be able to do everything**

conscientiously, and will be able to seek the truth and do things according to the principles, and so will be able to do your duty properly and satisfy God. If you are worthy of the mission that God has given you, and of all that God has sacrificed for you and His expectations of you, then this is really making an effort” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Perform One’s Duty Well, One Must at Least Be Possessed of a Conscience and Reason). **“When selfishness and schemes for your own profit appear in you, and you realize it, you should pray to God and seek the truth in order to address this. The first thing you should be aware of is that in essence, acting in this way is a violation of the truth principles, it is harmful to the work of the church, it is selfish and despicable behavior, it is not what people of conscience and reason ought to be doing. You should put aside your own interests and selfishness, and should think of the work of the church—that is what God wills. After praying and reflecting on yourself, if you truly realize that acting thus is selfish and despicable, putting aside your own selfishness will be easy. When you put aside your selfishness and schemes for profit, you will feel grounded, you will be at peace, joyous, and will feel that a person of conscience and reason should think of the church’s work, that they should not fixate on their personal interests, which would be so selfish, despicable, and devoid of conscience or reason. Acting selflessly, thinking of the work of the church, and doing things exclusively to satisfy God is righteous and honorable, and will bring value to your existence. Living this way on earth, you are being open and honest, you are living out normal humanity, and the true image of man, and not only do you have a clear conscience, but are also worthy of all the things bestowed upon you by God. The more you live like this, the more grounded you will feel, the more peaceful and joyous you will be, and**

the brighter you will feel. As such, will you not have set foot upon the right track of faith in God?" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last

Days. In Giving One's Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). I understood that to perform my duty well, I have to work hard. I can't just outwardly work hard and pay a price. What matters most is bearing a burden in my heart, putting the work of the church above all else, doing my best, and achieving the things I ought to. Only in this way am I performing my duty and living with a semblance of humanity. Although I encountered various difficulties and problems in my duty, through these difficulties, I clearly saw my depraved state of craving for comfort and disregard for progress. I realized my mistaken views on pursuit so I could repent and change. These difficulties and problems are chances for me to gain the truth and cast off my corrupt dispositions. At the same time, they also made me see my professional shortcomings, so that I could improve my professional skills and make progress in my duty. Through these difficulties, I was able to make progress, and isn't that a good thing? After I understood God's will, I felt motivated again. Later, I prayed to God about our problems and difficulties, sought God's guidance, and discussed solutions with my brothers and sisters. From the bottom of my heart, I didn't want to be lazy or hands-off anymore, and I also worked hard to learn professional skills. When I encountered difficulties and wanted to give up, I prayed to God, forsook the flesh, and practically paid a price to seek out a solution. After a while, I finally found a breakthrough, the problem was quickly resolved, and the results of video work improved a little compared to previously. I felt much more secure doing my duty this way. Actually, solving problems and doing practical work was not that difficult, and I didn't suffer very much. I was just a little more conscientious in my duty and God guided me. My entry is

still very limited, so in the future, I will focus on resolving my corrupt dispositions in my duty, and do my duty with all my heart to satisfy God!

78. What I Learned From Being Dismissed

By Riley, USA

The word of God says: **“People cannot change their own disposition; they must undergo the judgment and chastisement, and suffering and refinement, of God’s words, or being dealt with, disciplined, and pruned by His words. Only then can they achieve obedience and faithfulness to God, and no longer be perfunctory toward Him. It is under the refinement of God’s words that people’s dispositions change. Only through the exposure, judgment, discipline, and dealing of His words will they no longer dare to act rashly but instead will become steady and composed. The most important point is that they are able to submit to God’s current words, and to His work, even if it is not in line with human notions, they are able to put these notions aside and willingly submit”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. People Whose Dispositions Have Changed Are Those Who Have Entered Into the Reality of God’s Words). God’s words are very practical. Only by being judged, chastised, dealt with, and pruned by God’s words can we change our satanic dispositions and achieve obedience and faithfulness to God. I used to perform my duties with a corrupt disposition, always protecting my face and status. After being dismissed, I gained knowledge of my corrupt disposition from the judgment and revelation of God’s words. I felt remorse and despised myself, and when I got another duty, I did better than before.

Last August, I was elected as a church leader and was responsible for the work of the church alongside a few other brothers and sisters. I was mainly following up on watering work, while also participating in the decision-making for church projects. We’d divided up responsibilities, but I knew that the church’s work is one comprehensive unit, and that I had to

cooperate with brothers and sisters to safeguard the interests of the church and perform my duties properly. At first, I was really attentive in our weekly meetings. I actively participated in the discussion, and put forward recommendations. Then one day in October, the watering of newcomers was almost delayed because I hadn't followed up in time. The higher-ups harshly pruned and dealt with me. I thought to myself, "There was a problem in my work, so I was the one dealt with. If more problems come up, the leaders would see through me and say that I can't do practical work, and I'd be dismissed. Then how could I show my face again? Who would look up to me? No, I have to put more effort into the work I am responsible for, and no more mistakes can be made."

After a while, the scope of my responsibilities expanded. I wasn't good at some things, so it required a lot of time to get the hang of the relevant principles, but there were so many things that needed to be discussed and decided on in every co-worker meeting, and this was taking up a lot of time. I wondered if it might affect the work I was responsible for after a while. If the work I was responsible for wasn't effective and there were more problems, I'd definitely be dismissed, and then what would the others think of me? Other people were following up on other church projects. I figured they could have their discussions, but I had plenty of work. What's more, them finishing their work had nothing to do with me and that wouldn't gain me any praise. But I'd be directly responsible for problems if they arose within my scope, so I should just look after my own responsibilities. After that, I put more time and effort into the main work I was responsible for and treated other work like a burden. When church work needed to be discussed and decided on, I gave my viewpoint on anything involving my work, but I just occupied myself with my own tasks when it came to things outside that scope. I didn't listen closely to the discussions, so when my stance or

decision was needed, I just fell in line with everyone else. When important matters needed urgent discussion and deciding, as soon as I saw that they weren't related to my duty, I'd disregard them and act indifferent.

After a while, I kept hearing from brothers and sisters that some matters hadn't been seen to properly and they'd been dealt with by our leaders, and also that personnel arrangements weren't in line with principles, creating losses for the work of the church. Some things required everyone to decide and sign off on them. Since they hadn't been handled properly, this eventually harmed the interests of the church. Also, the purchase of goods for the church wasn't seen to properly, resulting in the loss of the church's money. Things like this kept happening. I figured it was a good thing there weren't any major problems in my work, and that when a leader looked into who was to blame, the blame wouldn't come back to me. This was the kind of irresponsible attitude I had toward my duty for quite a long time and I didn't see anything wrong with it. One day, a sister I worked with said I wasn't taking on a burden in my duty or seeing the bigger picture, but I was only paying attention to my own work, and I wasn't being proactive in decision-making. She said that was dangerous and if I didn't turn this around, I'd be cast out by God sooner or later. She said I should thoroughly reflect on my attitude toward my duty. After her fellowship, I still didn't reflect on myself. Instead, I reasoned to myself: "Haven't you seen all my suffering? It takes a lot to do this job well. If there are problems with the work I'm responsible for, that is on me, then what would the others think of me? They'd think I'm incapable and that I can't do practical work. What's more, isn't anyone responsible for those other jobs? My participation in these decisions won't affect anything." And so, I had always been careless and irresponsible toward the work of the church, and I did not reflect or try to know myself.

In January 2021, a leader came to me and said, “The brothers and sisters have said you’re not bearing a burden in your duty, that during discussions of work, you rarely express your viewpoint, you aren’t putting forward substantive recommendations, and you don’t feel an ounce of responsibility toward the church’s work. You are not fit to be a leader. After discussion, everyone has decided you should be dismissed.” Listening to the leader, I felt entirely in a daze, on the verge of collapse. I thought, “I haven’t been participating much in the church’s overall work, but I’ve been incredibly busy every day with my own responsibilities and I’ve suffered so much. How could you say I’m not bearing a burden? Isn’t it enough that I’ve been completing my work without issue?” For a while I couldn’t accept this outcome, but I still believed that everything God did was good, and I wasn’t aware of it yet. I prayed to God and sought His guidance so I could reflect and know myself.

Later, I saw a passage from God’s words that moved me greatly. Almighty God says: **“Conscience and reason should both be components of a person’s humanity. These are both the most fundamental and most important. What kind of person is one who lacks conscience and does not have the reason of normal humanity? Generally speaking, they are a person who lacks humanity, a person of extremely poor humanity. Going into more detail, what manifestations of lost humanity does this person exhibit? Have a go at analyzing what characteristics are found in such people and what specific manifestations they present. (They are selfish and mean.) Selfish and mean people are perfunctory in their actions and stand aloof from anything that does not concern them personally. They do not consider the interests of God’s house, nor do they show consideration for God’s will. They take on no burden of performing their duties or testifying for God, and they have no sense of**

responsibility. What is it that they think about whenever they do something? Their first consideration is, 'Will God know if I do this? Is it visible to other people? If other people don't see that I expend all this effort and work industriously, and if God doesn't see it either, then there is no use for my expending such effort or suffering for this.' Is this not extremely selfish? It is also a base sort of intent. When they think and act in this way, is their conscience playing any role? Is their conscience accused in this? No, their conscience is not playing any role, and it is not accused. There are some people who do not take any responsibility regardless of the duty they are performing. They don't promptly report problems they discover to their superiors, either. When they see people being disruptive and disturbing, they turn a blind eye. When they see wicked people committing evil, they don't try to stop them. They don't protect the interests of the house of God, or consider what their duty and responsibility is. When they perform their duty, people like this don't do any real work; they are people-pleasers who are greedy for comfort; they speak and act only for their own vanity, face, status, and interests, and are only willing to devote their time and effort to things that benefit them. The actions and intents of someone like that are clear to everyone: They pop out whenever there is an opportunity to show their face or to enjoy some blessing. But, when there is not an opportunity to show their face, or as soon as there is a time of suffering, they vanish from sight like a tortoise retracting its head. Does this kind of person have conscience and reason? (No.) Does a person without conscience and reason who behaves in this way feel self-reproach? Such people have no sense of self-reproach; the conscience of this kind of person serves no purpose. They have never felt reproach from their conscience, so can they feel the reproach or

discipline of the Holy Spirit? No, they cannot” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One’s Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). I felt God’s words pierced my heart. I was exactly what God described. I’d been inattentive and aloof toward my duty, paying no attention to anything outside of my responsibilities. I’d only attended to my own work. I had only considered whether my desire for reputation and status could be satisfied. I hadn’t safeguarded the work of the church at all. During that time, when everyone was in discussions to make decisions, I thought that any successes outside of my own responsibility wouldn’t help me look good, and that if these things weren’t handled well the blame wouldn’t fall on me. So I wouldn’t participate if I could avoid it. I just went through the motions, going along with everyone else. That was careless and irresponsible. I was very diligent and hardworking in the work within my scope, afraid of being pruned and dealt with if there were a problem with it, or that I would be dismissed and absolutely discredited. In order to take care of my own work well and keep my status and image with others, I treated decision-making like a nuisance and a waste of time, keeping me from carrying out my own work. Reflecting on my behavior, I saw that the intent behind the performance of my duty had been to satisfy myself, and that all my suffering had been for myself. I hadn’t taken on any burden or sense of responsibility to safeguard the overall work or interests of the church. Had I not been devoid of humanity? I was totally unworthy of such an important job. It was then that I fully accepted my dismissal. Although I was aware that my actions were not in line with God’s will, I still didn’t understand my own nature and I didn’t know what exactly led to my lack of a burden for my duty, my fixation on reputation and status, and my total disregard of the interests of the church. I brought this problem before God in prayer after that, asking God to lead me to know the root and essence of my problem, to

see my satanic disposition, so I could hate myself from the bottom of my heart.

After that, I read a passage of Almighty God's words: **"Antichrists have no conscience, sense, or humanity. Not only do they lack any shame, but they have another hallmark, too: They are uncommonly selfish and vile. The literal sense of their 'selfishness and vileness' is not hard to grasp: They are blind to anything but their own interests. Anything concerning their own interests gets their full attention, and they will suffer for it, pay a price, engross themselves in it, devote themselves to it. Anything not related to their own interests they will turn a blind eye to and take no notice of; others can do as they please—they don't care if anyone is being disruptive or disturbing, and to them, this has nothing to do with them. Put tactfully, they mind their own business. But it is more accurate to say that this kind of person is vile, sordid, wretched; we define them as 'selfish and vile.' How does the selfishness and vileness of the antichrists manifest itself? In anything that benefits their status or reputation, they make effort to do or say whatever is necessary, and they willingly endure any suffering. But where work arranged by God's house is concerned, or where work that benefits the life growth of God's chosen people is concerned, they utterly ignore it. Even when evildoers disrupt, disturb, and commit all kinds of evil, thereby seriously affecting the work of the church, they remain impassive and unconcerned, as if this has nothing to do with them. And if someone discovers and reports an evildoer's wicked deeds, they say they saw nothing and feign ignorance. But if someone reports them and exposes that they don't do practical work and only pursue reputation and status, they see red. Meetings are hurriedly convened to discuss how to respond, investigations are held into who went behind**

their back, who the ringleader was, who was involved. They will not eat or sleep until they have gotten to the bottom of it and the matter has been completely put to rest; sometimes they are only happy once they've taken down everyone involved in reporting them. This is the manifestation of selfishness and vileness, is it not? Are they doing church work? They are acting for the sake of their own power and status, pure and simple. They are running their own operation. Regardless of what work they undertake, the kind of person who is an antichrist never gives any thought to the interests of the house of God. They only consider whether their own interests will be affected, only think about the little bit of work in front of them that benefits them. For them, the primary work of the church is just something they do in their spare time. They don't take it seriously at all. They only move when they're prodded into action, only do what they like to do, and only do work that is for the sake of maintaining their own status and power. In their eyes, any work arranged by God's house, the work of spreading the gospel, and the life entry of God's chosen people are not important. No matter what difficulties other people have in their work, what issues they have identified and reported to them, how sincere their words are, the antichrists pay no heed, they do not get involved, it's as if this has nothing to do with them. No matter how major the problems emerging in the church's work are, they are utterly indifferent. Even when the problem is right in front of them, they only address it perfunctorily. Only when they are directly dealt with by the Above and ordered to sort out a problem will they grudgingly do a little real work and give the Above something to see; soon after, they will continue with their own business. Toward the work of the church, toward the important things of the wider context, they are

disinterested, oblivious. They even ignore the problems they discover, and they give perfunctory answers or use their words to brush you off when asked about problems, only addressing them with great reluctance. This is the manifestation of selfishness and vileness, is it not?" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Four: Summarizing the Character of Antichrists and the Essence of Their Disposition (Part One)). God's words pierced my heart. Antichrists only work for their own reputation and status, and they're diligent in anything involving their own interests. They can suffer, and expend all their mental and physical energy for that. They ignore anything that won't benefit them. They are particularly selfish and contemptible. I saw that my behavior had been the same as an antichrist's, and that I'd only been working for my own reputation and status. "Let things drift if they do not affect one personally" and "The less trouble, the better" were satanic philosophies I'd lived by. I'd only been paying attention to work that I was responsible for, and that could impact my reputation and status, and I ignored work that didn't fall within my scope of responsibility. This resulted in severe losses for the work and money of the church. I saw that I'd been a selfish, self-interested, contemptible degenerate, and I wasn't worthy of confidence. Thinking back on that time, a series of problems cropped up in the church's work, and the leaders dealt with the other brothers and sisters for not doing the work properly. I wasn't directly criticized, but I was also a church leader, and had a responsibility that could not be shirked. If I had diligently tended to and participated in work discussions, perhaps I might have discovered some of the problems. But to save my own face and status, I only saw to my own little set of responsibilities, and I didn't consider at all the overall work or interests of the church. Seeing my various transgressions in my duty and the irreparable losses I caused in the work of the church, I was filled with regret and self-

blame. God exalted me and showed me grace, allowing me to perform such an important duty and giving me a chance to hone myself, so that I could understand the truth more quickly. I had enjoyed the watering and sustenance of God's words for many years, yet I repaid this with ingratitude and didn't want to do my duty properly or repay God's love. All I thought about was how to protect my own image and status and my own little sphere so I wouldn't be dealt with. I was careless and irresponsible with this important work and just stood idly by as the interests of the church suffered and the work of the church was impacted. I was indifferent and lacked any sense of conscience. How could I even be considered human? When a family feeds a dog, the dog will be unfailingly loyal. I was truly worse than even an animal. The more I thought about it, the more I felt I was unworthy of enjoying God's grace. At this time, I came before God and prayed: "Oh God, I've only considered my own reputation and status in my duty without safeguarding the work of the church whatsoever. I was devoid of humanity, and I was selfish and self-interested. My dismissal is the coming of Your righteousness, and even more, it is Your love and salvation of me. I'm ready to repent."

Afterward, I read a passage of God's words: **"What is the standard by which a person's actions and behavior are judged to be good or evil? It is whether or not they, in their thoughts, outpourings, and actions, possess the testimony of putting the truth into practice and of living out the truth reality. If you do not have this reality or live this out, then without doubt, you are an evildoer. How does God regard evildoers? To God, your thoughts and external acts do not bear testimony for Him, nor do they humiliate and defeat Satan; instead, they bring shame to Him, and they are riddled with marks of the dishonor that you have brought upon Him. You are not testifying for God, you are not**

expending yourself for God, nor are you fulfilling your responsibilities and obligations to God; instead, you are acting for your own sake. What does ‘for your own sake’ mean? To be precise, it means for Satan’s sake. Therefore, in the end, God will say, ‘Depart from Me, you that work iniquity.’ In God’s eyes, your actions will not be seen as good deeds, they will be considered evil deeds. Not only will they fail to gain God’s approval—they will be condemned. What does one hope to gain from such a belief in God? Would such belief not come to naught in the end?” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). From God’s words, I saw that His disposition is righteous and tolerates no offense. God sees into the depths of people’s hearts, and if people carry out their duties with intentions other than satisfying God, lack the testimony of practicing truth, satisfy themselves in every respect and pursue their own reputation and status, this is not commended by God. No matter how much someone suffers in this, God does not commemorate it, but they are condemned by God as a wicked person. My intentions in my duty were wrong. They weren’t to satisfy God, but I was running my own enterprise. I was willing to suffer and expend effort for the work I was responsible for, but it was to protect my status and image in the eyes of others. I wanted to be admired for appearing to suffer and work hard, to gain people’s praise and a place in their hearts. It was through God’s grace that I could serve as a leader and have that chance to hone myself. Leaders are responsible for the church’s overall work, and there are plenty of problems, difficulties and issues that need to be resolved. That requires seeking the truth and principles a lot. They may make mistakes in the work and they could be pruned or dealt with, but through constant review, correction, and reflection, they will gain a lot. It’s all practical knowledge, whether it’s about God’s righteous disposition or their

own corrupt disposition. God allows people to gain the truth through performing a duty, but I wasn't considering God's will or taking my duty seriously. I was treating it like an inconvenience, losing so many chances to gain the truth. In such an important duty, not being responsible or collaborating with others, and not playing a role in decisions and supervision, how was I really doing my duty? I was fooling and cheating God. I was doing evil!

Later on I read a passage from God's words: **"For all who perform a duty, no matter how profound or shallow their understanding of the truth is, the simplest way to practice entering into the truth reality is to think of the interests of God's house in everything, and to let go of one's selfish desires, personal intents, motives, pride, and status. Put the interests of God's house first—this is the least one should do. If a person who performs a duty cannot even do this much, then how can they be said to be performing their duty? That is not performing one's duty. You should first think of the interests of God's house, be considerate of God's will, and consider the work of the church. Put these things first and foremost; only after that can you think about the stability of your status or how others regard you. Do you not feel that this becomes a little easier when you divide it into two steps and make some compromises? If you practice like this for a while, you will come to feel that satisfying God is not such a difficult thing. Furthermore, you should be able to fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duty, and set aside your selfish desires, intents, and motives; you should have consideration for God's will, and put the interests of God's house, the work of the church, and the duty that you are supposed to perform first. After experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to comport yourself. It is living**

straightforwardly and honestly, and not being a base, vile person; it is living justly and honorably rather than being despicable, base, and a good-for-nothing. You will feel that this is how a person should act and the image that they should live out. Gradually, your desire to satisfy your own interests will lessen” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last

Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition).

God’s words gave me a path to practice. The interests of the church have to come first in our duties. We have to accept God’s scrutiny and focus on seeking the truth, put aside our face, status, and personal interests, and safeguard the work of the church in all respects. This is the only way to act in line with God’s will and to live openly and honorably. I’d always thought that participating in decision-making for the church’s work would delay my own work, but that’s an absurd idea. In fact, as long as you focus on seeking the truth principles, maintain a sense of priority, and take care of critical tasks, then work won’t be delayed. And by participating in decision-making, you’ll grasp more principles, benefiting your duty and yourself. God’s house has each church elect a few leaders to be jointly responsible for the church’s work so each person can complement, supervise and keep each other in check. Especially in some complicated issues where they act as decision makers, this can prevent losses to the work of the church as a result of arbitrary decision-making and lack of insight, but I was careless and negligent in such an important duty. I was truly unworthy of confidence, and I deserved to be dismissed and cast out. When I figured this out, I resolved that in the future, no matter if something is my main work responsibility, if it’s work of the church or involves its interests, that’s my responsibility and duty, and I should do my best to safeguard the work of the church.

Later on, I was selected as a leader for another church. I knew that this was God's exaltation. I'd been selfish and contemptible, but the church still allowed me to perform such an important duty. I swore I'd do it properly, that I wouldn't selfishly only consider my own work. I was one of three leaders at that church, and each one was responsible for one portion of work. I saw a lot of things in the work I was responsible for that I did not understand, that needed time and effort to learn. Every day I had a full work schedule, and sometimes I felt I didn't have enough time. One day, a sister I worked with came to me and said she wanted me to help her handle some problems. I thought, "A few days before, an upper leader reviewed my work and said there was a lot I hadn't done properly. My time is so precious. If I go and help her and my work is delayed, and this keeps me from getting results, what will the leader think of me? Will she say I'm incompetent and can't do practical work? Will I be dismissed again?" At that thought, I realized I was thinking of my face and status again, that the work of the church is a whole and I can't divide it. If I only attended to my own responsibilities and disregarded everything else, wouldn't that be selfish and contemptible, and safeguarding my own interests? I couldn't do that. I had to put aside my own interests and cooperate with this sister to resolve the church's problems. So, I agreed to help her handle the problems. When I did this I felt at peace and felt the freedom that comes from practicing the truth. Although being dismissed was very painful for me, it also gave me a valuable lesson. It gave me a practical awareness of God's righteous disposition that tolerates no offense. Also, I've somewhat corrected my mistaken views and careless attitude toward my duty. I thank God for saving me.

79. Just for 300,000 Yuan

By Li Ming, China

Around 9 p.m. on October 9, 2009 when my wife, daughter and I were having a gathering, we suddenly heard an urgent knocking on the door. I rushed to hide our books of God's words, and just as my wife opened the door seven police officers burst in, one of them shouting, "We're with the National Security Brigade. You're coming with us!" They forced me into a police vehicle and three officers stayed behind to search our home. I found out later that about half an hour after they took me, they also brought my wife into custody.

In the car they threatened me: "Your leader has already been arrested. As long as you tell us everything you know, we won't make things hard for you." They also said some things slandering the church. I was so angry to hear all those lies from them, but I also felt some fear, not knowing how they were going to torture me. I said a prayer to God in my heart asking Him to watch over me so that no matter how I suffered, I wouldn't become a Judas and betray God. They took me into the National Security Brigade, and two plainclothes officers pulled me into an upstairs room, then pushed me down onto a sofa. The captain asked me, "When did you become religious? Where do you have gatherings? Who is your leader? How many people are in your church?" I didn't answer. He took a few photos out of a pocket and asked me if I recognized the people in them, to which I responded, "No." Then he said, "The Almighty God you believe in is expressly forbidden in China. The Central Committee decreed a long time ago that any underground churches must be wiped out, so you'd better start talking right now!" He went on, demanding to know where 300,000 yuan (about \$45,000) of the church's money was. One of the officers smacked

the table and yelled, eyes wide, “We’ve got the receipts and we know you have 300,000 yuan. Get that money to us right now!” Seeing that fierce look on his face made me angry and I responded, “That’s not your money. Why are you demanding it? Why do you want to seize it?” The two officers rushed at me and started hitting me right in the face, and kept beating me off and on from 10 p.m. to 12 a.m. My face and head were entirely swollen, my ears were ringing, and my whole body was in pain. I lay on the floor, closed my eyes, and said a silent prayer to God, asking Him to give me strength and watch over my heart, so that even if I were beaten to death I would never give up the church’s money, never be a Judas. The police saw I wasn’t saying anything, so they took me to a detention center and left me handcuffed to an iron railing overnight.

They put me in a detention house after that. Over the next few days, the police brought me in for questioning three times to find out where the church’s money was kept, and I didn’t tell them a thing. A little after 8 a.m. on the morning of October 17, the police took me back to the National Security Brigade, cuffed my hands and feet to an iron chair in an interrogation room, and then demanded to know where that money was. I still didn’t say anything. An officer picked up a double layer of thinly cut bamboo and started whipping me in the head and upper body with it, and used it to try to force my mouth open. My head was being thrashed back and forth. When he wasn’t able to pry my mouth open, he twisted my ears forcefully while pulling upward on them really hard and yelling, “I asked you a damn question! Are you deaf or something? You think you’re going to ignore me? I’ll beat you if you act tough, and then we’ll see who’s really tough!” Saying this, he pulled on the hair by my ears, and then yanked the hair on the top of my head back and forth. I felt like my scalp was about to be ripped off and felt really dizzy. They tormented me nonstop until about

10 p.m. that night, and seeing I categorically refused to speak, they said viciously, “That’s it for today, but you’d better give it some good thought tonight and give us some answers tomorrow!” I had marks all over my body from them beating me and my back was burning with pain. Not knowing what they had in store for me the next day, I was feeling a little weak, so I silently prayed, “Almighty God! Please protect me and give me faith so that I won’t be a Judas or betray You, even if it means my death.”

The next evening, the captain of the National Security Brigade came to question me. He glowered at me and yelled, “The evidence is right in our faces but you won’t admit it. I suggest that you wise up and spit it out, or else you’ll pay the price!” Seeing I still wasn’t talking, he got so angry he stood up and clenched his fists with a demonic look on his face. I really didn’t know how I would take it if he started punching me with those fists! I quickly said a prayer, “Almighty God! Please stay with me and take my fear away. Guide me to stand witness.” After my prayer I remembered something God said: **“Those in power may seem vicious from the outside, but do not be afraid, for this is because you have little faith. As long as your faith grows, nothing will be too difficult”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 75). No matter how fierce the police may be, they are also in God’s hands. They can’t do anything to me without God’s permission, so I knew I had to lean on God to stand witness. This thought strengthened my faith and I didn’t feel so afraid anymore. Just then, a bald officer looked at me and yelled, “We have some tricks up our sleeves if you don’t talk! We’ll take you to the provincial office and those guys can definitely open your mouth.” But I still didn’t say anything no matter how they threatened me.

They took me into another National Security Brigade interrogation room a few days later. All four walls were covered with really thick

sponges and there was an iron chair placed in the middle of the room. An officer sat me down in the chair, secured my hands and feet to it, and then went on to interrogate me about the whereabouts of the church's money. He asked me fiercely, "Are you going to hand over that 300,000 or not? You think it'll be fine if you don't say anything? I've got nothing but time for you!" He picked up one of those cuts of bamboo and started whipping me really hard on my upper body while yelling, "Are you deaf or something? Did you hear me?" Then he yanked my ears upward forcefully and pulled hard on the hair on my temples. He grabbed the hair on the top of my head and shook it back and forth as hard as he could. It was unbearably painful, as if my scalp was about to split open. They started whipping me with the bamboo again after that and I got swollen, bloody marks all over my body. The pain was really hard to bear. I deeply hated those police and also felt kind of afraid, not knowing how much they would keep torturing me or if I could withstand it. I prayed to God, "Oh God, Satan is relentlessly torturing me, trying to break down my resolve so that I'll betray You and they can steal the money of the church. God, I'm afraid I won't be able to physically take it. Please protect me and give me faith." I thought of a hymn of God's words after my prayer, called **"The Pain of Trials Is a Blessing From God"**: **"Do not be discouraged, do not be weak, and I will make things clear for you. The road to the kingdom is not so smooth; nothing is that simple! You want blessings to come to you easily, do you not? Today, everyone will have bitter trials to face. Without such trials, the loving heart you have for Me will not grow stronger and you will not have true love for Me. Even if these trials consist merely of minor circumstances, everyone must pass through them; it's just that the difficulty of the trials will vary from one person to another. Trials are a blessing from Me, and how many of you come often before Me and beg**

on your knees for My blessings? You always think that a few auspicious words count as My blessing, yet you do not recognize that bitterness is one of My blessings” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). Considering God’s words, I realized that experiencing oppression and hardship is God perfecting our faith. God was hoping that I could bear witness for Him before Satan. No matter how much I might suffer in the flesh, I couldn’t give in to Satan, but I had to stand witness for God and satisfy Him. Thinking about it that way, I didn’t feel like it was so difficult, but I just gritted my teeth and withstood their torture. They threatened me when they saw I still wasn’t talking after they’d been beating me for 10 or 15 minutes: “You’re not saying a word—you’re not afraid of prison? If you’re locked up it’ll be a permanent stain. Your kids will never get into the civil service or be able to join the Party. You’ll be ruining their futures!” I wasn’t affected by what they said because I knew in my heart that people’s fates are entirely in God’s hands. My kids’ futures were subject to God’s rule and arrangements, and the police had no say over that. Just then, one of the officers called my daughter, and I heard her voice from the other end: “Dad! Are you and Mom okay in there?” I told her, “We’re fine, don’t worry. Just stay home and take care of your brother.” The police tried another tactic when they saw that one hadn’t worked, saying, “I’ll be straight with you. Your brother-in-law and I are from the same town and we work in the same unit. Your village secretary and I served in the military together, too. I asked around about you and everyone says you’re a good guy, so just tell us what you know and we’ll let you off the hook.” Certain this was a trick of Satan, I silently prayed to God, asking Him to guard my heart. When I didn’t respond, he went on: “Your wife has already talked, so just tell us what we want to know. Where’s that 300,000?” I said,

“I have nothing to say.” They started torturing me again when they saw that enticements weren’t working.

One night they wouldn’t let me eat or sleep, and the second I closed my eyes, they’d start tapping me in the head with the bamboo. If my back was slightly hunched, they would whip it really hard. It was October, so the nights were very cold and I was wearing nothing but a shirt with a business suit. By the wee hours of the morning I got so cold I had full-body shivers. One of the officers yelled, “Don’t think you’ll have it easy if you don’t talk. You’ll die in misery!” Hearing this did weaken me somewhat. I didn’t know how long they were going to torture me or if I would be able to keep taking it. I was praying to God nonstop, asking Him to guide me and watch over me. I also resolved that no matter what I might face, I could never betray God. The police officers on rotating shifts at the time were dressed really warmly and they all got colds, but though I just had my thin shirt and was tortured by them all night, I was completely fine. I thanked God for His care. An officer grumbled at me, coughing, “This cold I’ve got is all your fault!” Then one of them came and smacked me on the left side of my face so hard that I was seeing stars. I felt like the whole room was spinning. Another one was off to the side laughing and laughing, then he came up and smacked me really hard on the right side of my face, yelling, “Are you gonna talk or what? Where’s that money? We’ve all gotten sick thanks to this interrogation. We’ll just beat you to death and call it a deal!” While saying this he pushed the handcuffs really hard into my wrists, then elbowed the handcuffs really vigorously several times until they were deeply embedded into my flesh. I felt like my hands were about to break off. They got black and blue before long—I was in agonizing pain, my entire body was shaking, and I was sweating profusely. That sort of pain defies description. In that moment I felt like I was at the very end of what I

could handle, so I was praying to God over and over, asking Him to protect me so I could stand firm. Seeing my pained look, an officer standing off to the side mocked me, “You believe in God, so have your God come save you!” I knew Satan was testing me. I was thinking that the Communist Party wanted to use torture to get me to betray and deny God, but the more it persecuted me, the more clearly I saw its evil face of hating and opposing God, and the more resolute I was to have faith and follow God. Then I prayed, “God! The Communist Party’s brutal torture of me today is something that You’re allowing to happen so that I can see that it’s the devil Satan, that it’s Your enemy. I’m ready to forsake it and reject it from my heart, and I’m firmly resolved to follow You!”

After that an officer stomped really hard a few times on my handcuffs with the heel of his shoe, getting them stuck deep in the flesh of my wrists. It was such an intense pain I couldn’t even breathe. An hour later my hands started turning black and the veins all over my body were distended. My head felt like it was about to burst and even my heart hurt. I had full-body pain that I can’t even describe. I was afraid that I’d end up losing use of my hands if that went on. I thought of my aging father that needed care and my daughter and son that we were still raising. How would I care for them, young and old, if I lost my hands? Maybe I could just tell them some inconsequential things? But then I knew that selling out would mean I’d become a sinner through all the ages. Yet, I truly couldn’t withstand that torture anymore, and just wanted to die to put an end to the suffering, and that way I wouldn’t betray God either. I wanted to impale myself on the corner of the table to die and get it over with. In tears, I made my last prayer to God: “Almighty God! It was through Your grace that I could experience Your work of the last days. I don’t want to die this soon, but I really can’t handle Satan’s torture anymore and I’m afraid I’ll end up betraying You. I

don't want to hurt You.” During my prayer some of God's words came to mind: **“During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). God's words bolstered my faith. God was allowing me to go through that pain to perfect my faith, but not understanding God's will, I wasn't thinking of how to stand witness for God before Satan. I was just thinking of how to escape that situation. How selfish of me! I knew I couldn't die that way—as long as I had a single breath left in me, I had to stand witness for God! I prayed, “God, my life is in Your hands and I want to submit to what You plan for me. Please give me faith and protect me so I can stay strong.” The police saw they weren't going to get anything out of me and said threateningly, “Go give it some good thought tonight, and we'll be back to ask you some questions tomorrow.”

At that point I'd gone three days and two nights without any sleep. I was at my brink with exhaustion, my heart was in pain, and my whole body hurt too much to bear. The thought of the police further interrogating me the next day kept me up all night, praying to God nonstop, “Oh God! I'm afraid the police will keep torturing me tomorrow and I won't be able to physically withstand it. God, please protect me and give me faith and strength. I want to stand witness and humiliate Satan.” I remembered something from God's words after my prayer: **“When you face suffering, you must be able to lay aside concern for the flesh and to not make complaints against God. When God hides Himself from you, you must be able to have the faith to follow Him, to maintain your previous love**

without allowing it to falter or dissipate. No matter what God does, you must submit to His design and be prepared to curse your own flesh rather than make complaints against Him. When you are faced with trials, you must satisfy God, though you may weep bitterly or feel reluctant to part with some beloved object. Only this is true love and faith” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement).

I thought over God’s words and could see that He was allowing that to happen to me to test whether I had true faith or not, and to give me a chance to stand witness for God. I thought of Job being tested by Satan, losing all his possessions, his children, and having his whole body break out in boils. Even so, Job didn’t blame God, but praised His name, bearing resounding witness for God. Peter also suffered persecution and was perfectly willing to be crucified upside down for God’s sake, loving God and submitting to Him to the point of giving up his life. But after some cruel torture by some police officers, all I thought of was my own flesh and I wanted to escape after just a bit of suffering. I didn’t have true faith and obedience for God, much less any testimony. I felt more ashamed the more I thought about it and said a prayer, “God, my life is worthless. No matter what the police do to me after this, no matter how much physical suffering I have to go through, I don’t want to just think of myself anymore. I want to put myself in Your hands, and submit to Your orchestrations and arrangements.” After that prayer something amazing happened—all the pain in my body just disappeared and I felt as if I was suddenly a lot lighter. I gave heartfelt thanks to God. The next day around 8 a.m. the police came back to interrogate me, demanding to know where the money was, but no matter how they questioned me I just said I didn’t know. They went through several more rounds of interrogation, and when they still couldn’t get any useful information out of me, they left me with a parting shot, “Look

forward to prison!” I thought to myself that even if I stayed in prison until the end of my days, I’d never betray God.

After holding me for a month, they ultimately gave me a year of reeducation through labor, slapping me with a charge of “using a cult organization to undermine the enforcement of the law.” Seeing how much the Communist Party hates people of faith reminded me of something God said: **“Small wonder, then, that God incarnate remains completely hidden: In a dark society such as this, where the demons are merciless and inhumane, how could the king of devils, who kills people without batting an eye, tolerate the existence of a God who is lovely, kind, and also holy? How could it applaud and cheer the arrival of God? These lackeys! They repay kindness with hate, they began treating God as an enemy long ago, they abuse God, they are savage in the extreme, they have not the slightest regard for God, they plunder and pillage, they have lost all conscience, they go against all conscience, and they tempt the innocent into senselessness. Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin! ... Why put up such an impenetrable obstacle to the work of God? Why employ various tricks to deceive God’s folk? Where is the true freedom and the legitimate rights and interests? Where is the fairness? Where is the comfort? Where is the warmth? Why use deceitful schemes to trick God’s people? Why use force to suppress the coming of God? Why not allow God to freely roam upon the earth that He created? Why hound God until He has nowhere to rest His head? Where is the warmth among men?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). The Communist Party tries to look like it’s full of

virtue and morality, bloviating about religious freedom all the while secretly employing tactics to arrest and persecute God's chosen people, vainly thinking they can make a clean sweep of believers. Mankind was created by God and our having faith and worshiping God is right and natural, but the Communist Party is madly arresting and oppressing us, trying to get us to deny and betray God. I could see that having the Communist Party in power was having Satan in power—the Party hates the truth and hates God. It is, in essence, Satan the devil that is hostile to God. Before I never could see the Communist Party's demonic essence, but that arrest gave me some discernment and I became able to forsake and reject it from the heart. I also became more resolute in my confidence to follow God.

I was taken to a labor camp on November 9, 2009 where the police got two other prisoners to keep an eye on me. They never left my side, and I had to report to them just to use the restroom. The prison guards wouldn't let me speak to anyone, afraid I'd share the gospel with someone, and I had to recite the prison rules every single day. If I made mistakes with my recital, I had to stand as punishment. I was doing extremely hard labor from morning till night day in and day out, and if I couldn't finish my tasks I'd be cursed, beaten, and have to do the standing punishment. What they fed me was worse than the slop you'd feed a pig. For each meal I just got a small steamed bun and some watery soup that only had a piece of carrot the size of a little finger in it. I was always doing labor on an empty stomach. Whenever I felt miserable and depressed, I'd pray to God or quietly hum some hymns of God's words to myself. That was how I got through that year of prison life.

After getting out of prison the police warned me, "You can't be far away from home for an entire year. You have to be ready to show up the moment we call you." I learned after getting home that after my wife was

arrested, the police had also been questioning her nonstop about where the church's money was kept. She didn't tell them a thing and was released from a detention house after being held for 23 days. When the police couldn't get any information on where the money was, they went to our house to search it twice, even prying open our ceilings and grilling our two children about our faith. They even went to our son's school to harass him. Our kids got so scared they were constantly living on edge and never had a sense of safety. Seeing how those officers wouldn't even let a couple of children be just to get their hands on some money filled me with hatred for those Communist Party demons. After I got out, police surveillance prevented me from reading God's words or attending gatherings. I had no choice but to go out of town to share the gospel and do my duty. The police are still after me to this day, and they keep pressing my relatives and brothers and sisters I used to be in contact with for information on my whereabouts.

I went through some physical suffering through this persecution and hardship, but I truly experienced God's love. When I was being tortured, every time I was at my utter limit, it was God's words that gave me faith and strength and showed me the way to stand strong. It was also God's words that led me to see through Satan's tricks and overcome Satan's temptations one after another. Through all this, I was able to see the power and authority of God's words and that only God can save mankind. My faith in God grew. I also clearly saw the Communist Party's evil face, that it hates God and works against Him. I was able to forsake it and reject it from the bottom of my heart. No matter how much persecution and hardship I might suffer in the future, I will absolutely do my duty to satisfy God!

80. Escaping the Rumor Mill

By William, USA

In October of 2016, I came to New York, and was later baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus at a Chinese church, becoming a Christian. But after more than a year in the church, I'd only learned how to pray and sing hymns, and my knowledge of the Lord and my understanding of the Bible were superficial, which left me disappointed. So, I'd often search for sermons on YouTube on my own so that I could understand the Lord's will.

In March of 2018, I met a few brothers and sisters in New York and learned a lot of truths and mysteries I'd never known before by gathering and fellowshiping with them, like the story behind the Bible, what the incarnation is, what salvation is, the difference between the true Christ and false ones, the difference between God's work and man's work, and so on. It was eye-opening and I gained a lot. I really enjoyed those gatherings. At one gathering, Brother Bryce read many words that weren't in the Bible. I was really surprised by this and asked whose words they were. He said these words were the utterances of Almighty God, Christ of the last days. When I heard the name "Almighty God," I was shocked. The pastor and elders had repeatedly warned us not to have any contact with the members from The Church of Almighty God. They said they believed in a person, not Jesus Christ. I felt flustered, and began to feel so anxious I couldn't sit still. I didn't register the things Bryce said after that, and I made an excuse and left the gathering.

When I returned home, I tossed and turned in bed, unable to sleep, as scenes of my gatherings with members of The Church of Almighty God flashed through my mind. Their fellowship was very enlightening and practical, and very beneficial for me. But what the pastor and elders said

about The Church of Almighty God echoed in my ears. I was upset, and I didn't know who to listen to. I took out my phone and went to the website I trust most, Wikipedia, to see how it described The Church of Almighty God. When I read on Wikipedia that the Church was founded by a person, that it was a human organization rather than the church of God, as well as some alarming negative reports from the CCP, I instantly became nervous and didn't dare listen to their fellowship anymore. I was about to remove all their contact information, but just as I was about to delete it, I recalled how I'd gotten on with them. They were upright, loving and patient with others, and I had great admiration for their character, what they lived out, and the way they talked. I only got good impressions from them. They weren't anything like what I'd seen online. This gave me pause. But I put too much stock in Wikipedia, so after thinking it over, I still decided to delete all my Church of Almighty God contacts and told Brother Peter about what I learned, who was investigating Almighty God's work with me. Peter said welcoming the Lord is an important matter we must take seriously, and persuaded me not to carelessly judge it, but to pray more and seek the Lord's guidance. I felt very conflicted, thinking, "What he says makes sense. Welcoming the Lord is an important matter that we must treat seriously. If Almighty God is the returned Lord Jesus, and I don't look into it, won't I miss my chance to welcome the Lord?" So I prayed to the Lord, "Lord! I am very confused right now. The Church of Almighty God's sermons are really nurturing and I've gained a lot. But Wikipedia says that it's a human organization rather than the church of God. Lord! I have no discernment. I fear I've gone astray, and I ask for Your guidance."

One day, on the way to church, a sister told me a story: "A believer in the Lord asked God to save him in a time of crisis, so God arranged three chances for him to be saved, but he missed every one. He said, 'No. I've

already prayed to the Lord. The Lord will come to save me.’ After his death, he realized that God had arranged these three chances, and he lost his life because he failed to seize these opportunities.” At church, I was surprised to find my pastor telling the exact same story. I was shocked, and thought, “This is incredible! I’ve heard two people telling me the same story in one day, reminding me to seize my chance to be saved by God. Is the Lord telling me to continue investigating the work of Almighty God?” So, I decided to continue to investigate Eastern Lightning.

I got in touch with Bryce and shared my confusion with him. I said, “I know there is truth to your fellowship and it has the Holy Spirit’s work. It’s been really helpful for me. But I saw on Wikipedia that The Church of Almighty God was founded by a man surnamed Zhao, that it was a human organization rather than the church of God. There were also a lot of negative reports from the CCP government on the internet, so it raised some doubts for me and I want to talk this over with you.” Bryce responded, “When investigating the true way, we can’t rely on unbeliever websites, some groups, political parties, or what people may say. We have to look at whether this way contains the truth, whether it’s God’s work. This is the most fundamental, most important principle. When the Lord Jesus came to work, the Pharisees concocted all sorts of rumors about Him and said lots of blasphemous things, saying He wasn’t conceived by the Holy Spirit, that His words were sacrilege, and that the Lord Jesus cast out demons by using the king of devils. They even said He hadn’t been resurrected, and so on. Many Jews listened to the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees and didn’t dare follow the Lord. But Peter, John and others saw that the way He preached about, His miracles and His work all came from God and had the authority and power of God, so they followed the Lord Jesus and gained His salvation. This all shows that what’s key in investigating the true way is

seeing whether it possesses the truth and the Holy Spirit's work. That's the only principle." Bryce then read a passage of Almighty God's words. Almighty God says: **"What is the most basic principle in seeking the true way? You have to look at whether or not there is the work of the Holy Spirit in this way, whether or not these words are the expression of the truth, who is testified to, and what it can bring you. Distinguishing between the true way and the false way requires several aspects of basic knowledge, the most fundamental of which is to tell whether or not the work of the Holy Spirit is present therein. For the essence of people's belief in God is the belief in the Spirit of God, and even their belief in God incarnate is because this flesh is the embodiment of the Spirit of God, which means that such belief is still belief in the Spirit. There are differences between the Spirit and the flesh, but because this flesh comes from the Spirit, and is the Word become flesh, thus what man believes in is still the inherent essence of God. So, in distinguishing whether or not it is the true way, above all you must look at whether or not it has the work of the Holy Spirit, after which you must look at whether or not there is truth in this way"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Those Who Know God and His Work Can Satisfy God). Bryce went on with his fellowship, "In the last days, Almighty God does the work of judgment beginning with God's house. He expresses all truths which cleanse and save mankind, such as the aims of God's management work, the stories behind the work of the Ages of Law, Grace, and Kingdom and what is achieved by that work, the mysteries of God's incarnation and name, and more. Almighty God judges and exposes people's satanic nature and the truth of their corruption that are in defiance of God, and the root of evil and darkness in the world. He tells us how Satan corrupts mankind and how God saves mankind. He also gives us the

path to cast off corruption and gain God's salvation and reveals the outcomes for every type of person. The truths He expresses and His judgment work completely fulfill the Lord Jesus' prophecy: **'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth'** (John 16:12-13). It also fulfills this prophecy in 1 Peter: **'For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God'** (1 Peter 4:17). Lots of true believers from all denominations who long for God's appearance and work have seen that Almighty God's words are the truth and the voice of God. They've determined that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned and have come before God. All that comes from God will thrive. In just over 20 years, Almighty God's kingdom gospel has spread across China and is now reaching across the world. This is God's unique power and authority and the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work. It's a manifestation of God's wisdom and almightiness. These facts prove that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned, that His work is the true way and the appearance and work of God in the last days."

Hearing Bryce's fellowship, I felt that only something from God would flourish more and more. Almighty God's words really are the truth and they really reveal a lot of mysteries and truths. Who but God could express the truth? If I didn't read Almighty God's truths in my search for the true way but blindly believed the lies posted on some website and spread by the CCP, that would be incredibly foolish. Bryce asked me to watch the movie Red Re-Education at Home. The main character's father heads a municipal United Front Work Department and what he says is just like what I saw on Wikipedia. He says the Church was established by a man surnamed Zhao, that its members all call him the man used by the Holy Spirit, and they listen to his sermons all the time, so that means it's a human organization,

and not God's church. This is what the main character says in response: "Who founded Christianity? Who founded Catholicism? Could it be Paul or Peter who was the founder? Who founded Judaism? Could it be that it was Moses? Isn't this all absurd? The atheist CCP has never acknowledged there is a God, much less that God has become flesh. No matter how much truth Christ incarnate expresses, how great His work is, or how great His salvation is, they'll do all they can to deny, conceal, and condemn it. They think Christianity and Catholicism were founded by human beings, too, and this is totally absurd. If it weren't for the Lord Jesus' appearance and work, there wouldn't be any believers or followers of the Lord and there's no way Christianity would exist. That's a fact. No matter how gifted the apostles were, how could they found a church? Just because people accepted the leadership and shepherding of the apostles, does that mean Christianity was founded by human beings? The Church of Almighty God came about entirely because of Almighty God's appearance and work. Because Almighty God expresses so many truths, and because people know it's God's voice and come before God, the Church came into being. After Almighty God began His work, He testified to the man used by the Holy Spirit as the leader of the Church. He is like Moses in the Age of Law, or the apostles in the Age of Grace. He is used by God to water, shepherd, and lead God's chosen people. He's doing the duty of a human. God's chosen people pray in the name of Almighty God and in gatherings they read and fellowship on Almighty God's words. God's chosen people accept and submit to this man's leadership in accordance with Almighty God's words. The CCP tells bare-faced lies, saying that our faith is in this man. They deny Almighty God's appearance and work, and deny the truths He expresses. They have ulterior motives. If it weren't for Almighty God's appearance and work, The Church of Almighty God wouldn't exist. That's

an undeniable fact.” I felt like the main character was right. The Church came to be because of God’s appearance and work, but just because God uses someone to lead the Church, the CCP says the Church was founded by a human being. Isn’t that absurd? The CCP knows that Christians in The Church of Almighty God believe in Almighty God, so why would they say that it’s a human organization, founded by a person? As I was puzzling over this, the main character went on, “So why does the CCP government say the Church is a human organization? Why won’t they mention God in the flesh? Why won’t they ever mention **The Word Appears in the Flesh**? The truths expressed by Almighty God are what the CCP fears most, because they know that all the believers in Almighty God accepted Him because they read **The Word Appears in the Flesh**. So they try to distract people by saying that The Church of Almighty God was founded by a human to cover up the truth that Almighty God, Christ of last days, has appeared and works. Their true goal in doing this is to stop people from following God. They twist the truth, insisting that the church of God’s appearance and work is a human organization. This is the excuse they’ve found to oppress God’s church.” Only then did I realize that the CCP’s claim that The Church of Almighty God is a human organization is a deliberate distortion of the facts and an excuse to suppress and persecute The Church of Almighty God. More so, they say this to mislead people, to stop people from having faith and following God. That’s the CCP’s evil motive!

After watching that clip, Bryce fellowshipped, “The CCP’s fabrication of these rumors and condemnations of The Church of Almighty God are inseparable from its demonic nature of hating the truth and resisting God. We all know that the CCP is atheist and it believes in Marxism-Leninism. It hates the truth and God’s appearance and work more than anything, and since establishing the country in 1949, it has wildly suppressed and

persecuted religious beliefs. It has condemned the house churches as evil cults, and has burned and destroyed countless copies of the Bible. It has arrested, persecuted, and imprisoned countless Christians and Catholics. Religious persecution has become even more brutal since Xi Jinping came to power. The Three-Self churches have been shut down and demolished, and countless crosses have been torn down. The CCP even plans to rewrite the Bible and the Koran to completely wipe out religious beliefs. Since Christ of the last days, Almighty God, appeared in China, the CCP has been hunting Him, scouring high and low, madly arresting and persecuting Christians. Many have been imprisoned and brutally tortured until they're disabled or dead, and over one million people have been forced to flee their homes. The CCP gets the media to propagate rumors and stir up trouble to frame and smear The Church of Almighty God. This is to incite and mislead the people of China and the world so they'll oppose and condemn the Church, too. It's trying to wipe out God's work of the last days. We can see from these facts that the CCP is an evil demon that opposes God, and misleads and harms people. It's the beast, the great dragon from Revelation! This completely fulfills these biblical prophecies: **'And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world'** (Revelation 12:9). **'The beast opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven'** (Revelation 13:6). Listening to the CCP's lies when investigating the true way and seeking God's appearance and work is ridiculous! And some people read what's on Wikipedia when looking into the true way, saying they trust that site and they'll only believe it if Wikipedia says that it's the true way. They use Wikipedia to determine whether it's the true way. Is that in line with the truth? Does Wikipedia contain the truth? It's an unbelievers' website. They compile materials and

write everything from unbelievers' perspective. Unbelievers have all been deeply corrupted by Satan and have betrayed God. They're not people of faith. They just go along with the crowd and tell lie after lie. They'll just parrot whatever the CCP says. Why not interview the Church itself? Why not report on it fairly and objectively? Almighty God's words express so many truths and they have rocked the entire religious world, even the world itself. Why don't they report on this fact? All sorts of testimonies from members from The Church of Almighty God of their experiences of God's work have been online for a while. Why aren't those mentioned at all? The CCP government has been brutally persecuting the Church and this has been publicized on international human rights organizations' websites. Why don't they reference that? Why do they only publicize the lies of the rumors and slander of the Church from the CCP government and the religious world? Aren't they intentionally hiding the truth and spreading the satanic government's lies? What issue does this highlight? That they're propaganda tools Satan uses to mislead people. If we believe Wikipedia when looking into the true way, if we believe its lies, wouldn't that be foolish? Many people have made this mistake in their investigation of the true way. If they see that governments and the religious world condemn something as not the true way, they won't believe in it. Are they even real believers? Not seeking God's words or hearing God's voice in their search, but believing Satan's words, and believing the CCP and religious clergy means that they believe and follow Satan, that they've been misled and taken by the beast, that they bear the mark of the beast."

I was totally convinced by Bryce's fellowship. I'd always thought of Wikipedia as the largest online encyclopedia that covered everything. I had really trusted it, but I realized then that it's an unbelievers' website. It contains no truth, nor is it testified of by God. It is a tool serving Satan.

Whatever twisted heresies the CCP government may release, Wikipedia repeats these fallacies. How can what it says be trusted? My investigation of the true way should have been based on God's words. I should have looked at whether this way has the truth, whether it was expressed by God, and whether it has the work of the Holy Spirit, because only God is the truth, the way, and the life, and only God can express the truth and show us the path to cast off sin and be fully saved. But even though I saw Almighty God's word is the truth and that it comes from God, I was still being controlled by the CCP's rumors and the words on a supposedly authoritative website, and didn't dare investigate Almighty God's work. I truly was confused! But thanks to my brothers' and sisters' continually aiding me and fellowshiping the truth with me, I wasn't deceived. Otherwise, I'd have missed my chance to welcome the Lord's return.

Then Bryce continued his fellowship: "Since these are all lies the CCP uses to mislead people and prevent them from looking into the true way, why does God allow these fabrications to exist? God's good intentions and wisdom are behind this. We'll understand once we take a look at what Almighty God says: **'In My plan, Satan has, all along, been stalking behind each step and, as the foil of My wisdom, has always been trying to find ways and means to disrupt My original plan. Yet could I succumb to its deceitful schemes? Everything in heaven and on earth serves Me; could the deceitful schemes of Satan be any different? This is precisely where My wisdom intersects; it is precisely that which is wondrous about My deeds, and it is the principle of operation for My entire management plan. During the era of the building of the kingdom, still I do not avoid the deceitful schemes of Satan, but continue to do the work I must. Among the universe and all things, I have chosen the deeds of Satan as My foil. Is this not a manifestation of**

My wisdom? Is this not precisely that which is wondrous about My work?’ (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 8). God’s words show us that in His work, He doesn’t evade Satan’s schemes but uses them to render service to determine the outcome for every type of person. God’s work in the Age of Kingdom is the last stage of His salvation of mankind. He expresses the truth to judge and cleanse people, while also sorting people according to their kind, ultimately rewarding the good and punishing the wicked, and ending the work of the entire age. God will make all those who sincerely believe in Him and love the truth into overcomers and bring them into His kingdom. He will expose and cast out the nonbelievers who only seek to eat their fill of bread as well as all the evil people and antichrists which resist God. These lies spread by the CCP are tools God uses in the service of achieving His work. True and false believers, the wheat and the tares, the sheep and the goats will all be revealed in this storm of lies. This is a test everyone who accepts God’s work of the last days must pass. The Lord Jesus said: **‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me ... neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand’** (John 10:27–28). God’s sheep hear His voice, and all true believers who love the truth don’t care what the CCP or the religious world says, or what’s written by the media or on websites. They just look at whether it’s the truth, whether it’s God’s voice. Once they confirm that Almighty God’s words are the truth and God’s voice, they follow Him, unobstructed by any person, thing, or event. They resolve to follow God. They are the wise virgins. The nonbelievers, those who don’t love the truth and seek only to eat their fill of bread don’t seek the truth, but blindly accept Satan’s lies and even go along with the CCP and the religious world’s clergy in spreading lies, madly judging and condemning God’s work of the last days. They’re all exposed as tares, as evil servants and

antichrists. They'll be cast out and will be left weeping and gnashing their teeth in the disasters. The lies of the CCP and religious world reveal the wheat and the tares, the sheep and the goats, the good and the evil servants. Ultimately, God will determine people's outcomes by how they approached God's work of the last days, by what they've done. Satan's lies and schemes are clearly doing service for God's work."

That was so dangerous! These rumors and lies nearly got me locked outside of the kingdom's gate. This thought scared me. There's a true risk to having faith but lacking discernment, and not seeking the truth. Now I know that the key to investigating the true way is to listen for God's voice and to see if it's the truth, if it's God's work. We absolutely cannot believe the CCP demons' lies and we have to have discernment over what pastors, elders, and websites say, too. We can't just blindly believe what they say, or we could fall into Satan's net at any moment and miss our chance to welcome the Lord and be taken up into the kingdom of heaven. Escaping the rumor mill and welcoming the Lord's return was God's mercy and salvation for me! Thanks be to Almighty God!

81. A Choice Made Without Regret

By Martha, Spain

My boyfriend and I met while working overseas. We both believed in the Lord Jesus and often went to church together. We had been together for three years, and we had plans to get married. In October of 2000, when I went back to China to visit my mother, my neighbor testified Almighty God's work of the last days to me, saying that the Lord Jesus had returned incarnate, and had expressed many truths to judge and purify mankind and save people from the bondage of sin so they could enter the kingdom of heaven. Later, I read many of Almighty God's words, and saw that Almighty God revealed the mystery of God's six-thousand-year management plan to save humankind, the inside story of God's three stages of work, the mystery of God's incarnation, and also revealed how Satan corrupts man, how God works step by step to save people, how God does the work of judgment in the last days to conclude the age, and so on. These truths and mysteries were things that I had never heard of in my many years of religious belief. No celebrity or great person could express these things. This completely fulfilled the words of the Lord Jesus: **"I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come"** (John 16:12-13). I was certain that the words of Almighty God were the truth and the voice of God, and that Almighty God is the returned Lord Jesus. I was very excited, and wanted to tell my boyfriend the good news as soon as possible. It would be perfect if we both accepted the work of Almighty God in the last days and ultimately entered the kingdom together. But then I remembered that when I was

overseas, Pastor Sean often spoke about avoiding “Eastern Lightning.” He said we must be careful once we returned to China, and never have any contact with people from Eastern Lightning. He also often went to some cities in China to visit church members, saying that there were heresies in China, and that they had to be careful. My boyfriend admired Sean very much and listened to what he said. If I told him outright that I accepted the work of Almighty God in the last days, would he tell Sean? But I also knew my boyfriend had been looking forward to the Lord Jesus’s return, so I really wanted to tell him as soon as I could. I thought that if I fellowshiped to him clearly, he should be able to accept it.

One night, I called him and said, “We both look forward to the return of the Lord Jesus, so how do you think the Lord Jesus will come back?” Unexpectedly, as soon as I finished speaking, my boyfriend said angrily, “Why are you suddenly asking me this question? The Bible clearly states that the Lord will come on a cloud, so how could there be any doubt? Have you been talking to someone from Eastern Lightning at home?” I was very surprised he responded so strongly to just a question. I said, “We have believed in the Lord for many years, and haven’t we both looked forward to receiving the Lord and being brought into the kingdom of heaven? Then how does the Lord Jesus come? Isn’t this question worth thinking about?” My boyfriend got even more angry and said, “How many times has Sean told us that those who preach the return of the Lord Jesus are speaking false words and deceiving people? He stressed over and over that we should not contact people from Eastern Lightning. Why don’t you listen? Your belief in the Lord is usually strong, but we’ve only been separated for a little over a month, and you’re already in contact with Eastern Lightning! Remember, we both yearn for the coming of the Lord Jesus, but even if He comes back, it won’t be like what Eastern Lightning claims, that He will return in the

flesh.” No matter what I said after that, he refused to listen. Finally, we hung up unhappily.

I couldn’t understand why my boyfriend reacted like that, and it made me very sad. Didn’t he look forward to the Lord’s coming? Why was he so resistant to just discussing how the Lord would come? That night, I lay in bed and couldn’t sleep, so I got up to read God’s word, where I saw a couple passages, **“Wherever God appears, there the truth is expressed, and there the voice of God will be. Only those who can accept the truth will be able to hear the voice of God, and only such people are qualified to witness the appearance of God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 1: The Appearance of God Has Ushered in a New Age). **“Christ of the last days brings life, and brings the enduring and everlasting way of truth. This truth is the path by which man gains life, and it is the only path by which man shall know God and be approved by God. If you do not seek the way of life provided by Christ of the last days, then you shall never gain the approval of Jesus, and shall never be qualified to enter the gate of the kingdom of heaven, for you are both a puppet and prisoner of history. Those who are controlled by regulations, by words, and shackled by history will never be able to gain life nor gain the perpetual way of life. This is because all they have is turbid water which has been clung to for thousands of years instead of the water of life that flows from the throne”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Christ of the Last Days Can Give Man the Way of Eternal Life). I pondered God’s words over and over, and felt that these words were too good and too practical! In the last days, the Lord Jesus returns to express the truth to save people. Only those who yearn for the truth and listen for God’s voice will see God’s appearance and welcome the Lord’s return. Those who ignorantly wait for the Lord to come on clouds but do not seek the truth or listen for God’s voice will miss

the chance offered by the Lord's coming to be lifted up, and will never be able to welcome the Lord's return. At this time, I remembered the Lord Jesus said: **"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"** (John 10:27), and prophesied in Revelation: **"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me"** (Revelation 3:20). Indeed, the most important thing in welcoming the Lord's coming is listening for God's voice. God's sheep can listen for God's voice and follow His footsteps. I realized my boyfriend refused to seek and investigate the true way because he hadn't read Almighty God's words. If he was God's sheep and a person who sincerely sought the truth, then I should show him some of Almighty God's words. If he could recognize that Almighty God's words are the truth and God's voice, he would be able to accept God's work of the last days, and we would be able to follow God's footsteps together. So, I spent several nights copying out some of the words of Almighty God and mailed them to him. Then, every day, I looked forward to him calling me to investigate God's work in the last days with me. A few days later, the phone at home rang, and I was very happy. I thought it was my boyfriend, but it was Sean. He said, "Your boyfriend told me that after you returned to your hometown, you met with people from Eastern Lightning. Is this true?" I said, "I'm seeking and investigating. I think the coming of the Lord Jesus is a very important matter and something we should seriously seek and investigate." Sean said, "Soon, I'll visit your hometown to see if you really have contact with someone from Eastern Lightning. I am your pastor, so I have to take responsibility for your life."

I thought Sean didn't mean it, because our locations were very far apart. Unexpectedly, soon, he really came. Several brothers and sisters and I wanted to take this opportunity to testify to Almighty God's work in the last

days, but when we met Sean, he asked me if I had accepted Eastern Lightning, and said arrogantly, “I have already been in contact with Eastern Lightning many times. To be frank, before I met with you, I went to a sister’s house in the northeast. Her brother believed in Eastern Lightning and wanted to testify their gospel to me. I have studied theology, I am familiar with the Bible, and I have had contact with many reputable pastors overseas, yet he still thought he could deceive and win me over? Ridiculous.” My brothers and sisters tried to persuade him, “So many brothers and sisters have preached the gospel to you and testified that the Lord Jesus has returned. If you resist and condemn without seeking and investigating, are you sincerely trying to welcome the Lord? The Lord Jesus said: **‘Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’** (Matthew 5:3). We are in the last days, the Lord has returned. When we hear people testify that the Lord has returned and expressed many truths, we should seek with an open heart, so that we can hear the Lord’s voice and see His appearance! If we do not seek or investigate, but instead blindly reject and resist, it is all too easy to follow in the footsteps of the Pharisees. God is a wise God, His thoughts are beyond human thoughts, and God’s work is a mystery that we humans cannot fathom. We would like to discuss with you on how to welcome the return of the Lord Jesus.” But Sean didn’t listen at all. He said, “If you want to talk to me about Eastern Lightning, then save your effort, because I won’t discuss it with you.” The brothers and sisters saw that he was very resistant and had no intention of seeking, so they stopped trying to talk with him. At this time, Sean received a call and said that some believers at a church in the northeast had accepted Eastern Lightning, and he wanted to go there to stop them. He asked me to quickly buy a plane ticket for him. I said, “Pastor Sean, Eastern Lightning testifies that the Lord Jesus has returned to express the truth to do the work of

judgment in the last days. You refuse to seek, investigate, and welcome the Lord, and beyond that, you want to hinder and restrict people from seeking the true way and listening for God's voice. Does this accord with the Lord's will?" He glared at me and said, "I will not let the people from Eastern Lightning come into the church to steal sheep. I intend to defend the Lord's way." Looking at Sean's arrogant appearance, I couldn't believe that this was the pastor I knew. I had met him four years ago, and to me, he had always been a very humble person who was very caring toward believers. I always thought he was a very good and pious pastor, but seeing his behavior and what he exposed today reminded me of the words of the Lord Jesus: **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in"** (Matthew 23:13). Sean stood on the podium every day preaching to people, telling us to be watchful and alert for the Lord's coming, but when the Lord Jesus really came back, not only did he not seek, investigate, or welcome the Lord, he condemned, resisted, and tried every means to hinder and disrupt believers as they seek and investigate. Under the banner of defending the Lord's way and protecting the flock, he maintained tight control over people. He was exactly the same as the Pharisees in their time, a servant of evil who wanted to prevent people from entering the kingdom of heaven!

Thinking that there were still many brothers and sisters in the church who had no discernment of Sean, who were bound and deceived by him, and who failed to investigate God's work in the last days, I contacted the brothers and sisters I knew and testified Almighty God's work to them. When Sean found out, he called and threatened me, "If you insist on believing in Eastern Lightning and come to the church to steal sheep, all of us will reject you, and all the brothers and sisters who know you will no

longer receive you.” Afterward, he also sent me several pamphlets that promoted boycotting The Church of Almighty God, all of which contained words that resist and blaspheme God. After this, I saw Sean’s true face even more clearly. He was a hindrance and a stumbling block that prevents people from investigating the true way. I didn’t want to talk to him anymore, so I stopped answering his calls. When he saw that I insisted on believing in Almighty God and preaching the gospel to the people he shepherded, he went to the homes of brothers and sisters who knew me in Zhejiang, Shanghai, and other places and told them not to contact me or listen to what I preached. After returning overseas, he closed off the church to me. He forbade anyone from answering my calls or contacting me, and said anyone who contacted me would be expelled.

One day, I received a letter from my boyfriend saying, “Sean said at church that you believe in Eastern Lightning, and you were completely deceived. From now on, we are no longer brother and sister, and there is no relationship between us. I will not answer your phone calls or write to you anymore. If you want to come back, everyone will welcome you, and we can continue our relationship, but if you insist on believing in Almighty God, then we will break up.” After reading the letter, I felt very sad, so I called him, but he said coldly, “I’m busy. I don’t have time to talk about this now.” I asked him, “Is this really how we’re breaking up?” He said, “If you stop believing in Eastern Lightning, we can continue our current relationship. I will ask my aunt to help you go abroad. She is doing business here, so you can come live here. We could have a very happy future. But if you insist on believing in Almighty God, then we have to break up. Take your time and think about it.” It was awful to see my boyfriend be so heartless. In the past, we were very happy together, and he took good care of me. I didn’t expect him to be so devoted to the pastor. Just because I

believed in Almighty God, he had to cut ties with me, regardless of our relationship over the past few years. My family knew I had a conflict with my boyfriend, and they all persuaded me to reconsider, saying, “Your boyfriend has a good job and good family. If you break up, it’s hard to say whether you’ll meet such a good match in the future. You are getting older, and it’s not easy to find a partner. If you don’t start a family, what will you do in your future life?” My boyfriend’s family also called and persuaded me not to believe in Almighty God, saying, “You two are not that young anymore. It’s time to think about getting married. Isn’t it a good thing if you both believe in the Lord Jesus? You’ll be very happy once you get married. Why insist on believing in Almighty God?” Facing pressure from both families, I didn’t know how to decide. If I chose to return to my previous church and marry my boyfriend, he could provide me with a good material life, and we could also settle down abroad. It was what many people dreamed of, but I would lose God’s salvation in the last days because of it, which I would regret for the rest of my life! In the last days, God comes incarnate for the second time to express the truth, thoroughly purify and save mankind, and make a group of overcomers. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I couldn’t let myself miss out! But if I chose to follow Almighty God, what would happen with my marriage? I had reached the age to marry, and marriage is a major event in life. During that period, I couldn’t eat or sleep well, and I was very tormented. When I saw many people my age were married and had families but I was still alone, I was very conflicted, and I didn’t know how to choose. I prayed to God over and over about this matter, asking God to guide me and let me know how to choose the path ahead. When my brothers and sisters learned about my situation, they all helped and fellowshiped with me, but I still couldn’t let go of my boyfriend. I was angry that he broke up with me. He didn’t even

talk to me. He had become so ruthless and cold. When the pastor said I was deceived, my boyfriend completely believed. When the pastor asked him to reject me, he broke up with me, completely disregarding our relationship over the past few years. The more I thought about it, the more miserable I felt.

One night, I was tossing and turning in bed. I couldn't sleep, so I got up and listened to the hymn of God's word **"People Should Seek to Live Out a Meaningful Life"**:

1 Man must pursue to live out a life of meaning, and should not be satisfied with his current circumstances. To live out the image of Peter, he must possess the knowledge and experiences of Peter. Man must pursue things that are higher and more profound. He must pursue a deeper, purer love of God, and a life that has value and meaning. Only this is life; only then will man be the same as Peter. ...

2 For everyone who aspires to love God, there are no unobtainable truths and no justice for which they cannot stand firm. How should you live your life? How should you love God, and use this love to satisfy His desire? There is no greater matter in your life. Above all, you must have such aspirations and perseverance, and should not be like those who are spineless, those who are weaklings. You must learn how to experience a meaningful life and experience meaningful truths, and should not treat yourself perfunctorily in that way. Without you realizing it, your life will pass you by; after that, will you have another opportunity to love God? Can man love God after he is dead? You must have the same aspirations and conscience as Peter; your life must be meaningful, and you must not play games with yourself. As a human being, and as a person who pursues God, you must be able to carefully

consider how you treat your life, how you should offer yourself to God, how you should have a more meaningful faith in God, and how, since you love God, you should love Him in a way that is more pure, more beautiful, and more good.

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment

I listened to this song over and over. Through it, I saw that Peter followed his pursuit to love and satisfy God all his life, and lived a meaningful and worthy life, and I was very moved. From the words and work of the Lord Jesus, Peter recognized that the Lord Jesus was Christ, the Son of the living God. He preached and worked for the Lord Jesus and was persecuted by Judaism, but he unwaveringly followed Him. Today, God had personally come incarnate among us to express words to work and save people. I had read God's words, heard God's voice, and determined that Almighty God is the second coming of the Lord Jesus. But when it came time to choose between Almighty God and my marriage, I was hesitant. I didn't want to lose this marriage and the chance to live a good life overseas with my boyfriend. I saw that although I had believed in the Lord for many years, what I pursued was not the truth and life from God, nor did I pursue loving God, satisfying God, and living a meaningful and worthwhile life. What I pursued was a life of material enjoyment and physical comfort. I contemplated God's words: **"Can man love God after he is dead?"** I asked myself, "If I don't spend my time on earth pursuing loving God, satisfying God, and living a meaningful and worthwhile life, then even if I get the marriage and fleshly comfort I want, what's the point? God coming in the last days to completely save humankind is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. If I missed it, I would feel a lifetime of regret! If I missed the chance of salvation offered by God's work in the last days to enjoy an easy life,

wouldn't it just be foolish? If I gave up the true way and chose marriage, would I really get the happy life I wanted?" I thought of a sister I contacted some time ago. She and her husband got married with Sean's help. After they got married, they went to work in a big city and bought a house. Their material conditions were very good, and I envied them. But when I visited her, she told me that although she and her husband both believed in the Lord Jesus and had a good material life, they were not happy together. They often fought about minor domestic issues, sometimes so badly that they didn't want to speak to each other. Her husband later chose to work in another city, leaving her alone at home with her two-year-old child, and her life was very miserable and lonely. I thought about her experience, and then considered some of the couples around me, who often quarreled and threatened each other with divorce. Looking at these facts, I saw more clearly that when we believe in and follow the Lord, we are only redeemed by the Lord Jesus. Our sins are forgiven, but the root cause of our sin is not resolved and we are not freed from the bondage and control of sin. People interact with each other based on their corrupt dispositions, and there is no genuine love, so no matter how much fleshly enjoyment we experience, our lives are still empty and painful. With this in mind, I realized that I should be very careful with the choices I faced now. I prayed to God again and again, asking God to guide and enlighten me so that I could make the right choice according to His will.

Later, I read a passage of Almighty God's words and understood God's will. Almighty God says: **"Nowadays, those who seek and those who do not are two entirely different types of people, whose destinations are also very different. Those who pursue knowledge of the truth and practice the truth are the ones to whom God will bring salvation. Those who do not know the true way are demons and enemies; they are the**

descendants of the archangel and will be objects of destruction. Even those who are pious believers of a vague God—are they not also demons? People who possess good consciences but do not accept the true way are demons; their essence is one of resistance to God. Those who do not accept the true way are those who resist God, and even if such people endure many hardships, they will still be destroyed. ... Anyone who does not believe in God incarnate is demonic and, moreover, will be destroyed. Those who have faith but do not practice the truth, those who do not believe in God incarnate, and those who do not at all believe in God's existence will also be objects of destruction. All those who will be allowed to remain are people who have undergone the suffering of refinement and stood firm; these are people who have truly endured trials. Anyone who does not recognize God is an enemy; that is, anyone who does not recognize God incarnate—whether or not they are inside or outside this stream—is an antichrist! Who is Satan, who are demons, and who are God's enemies if not resisters who do not believe in God? Are they not those people who are disobedient to God?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). From God's words, I understood that what God does in the last days is the work of separating each according to their kind. He expresses the truth and does the work of judgment through the incarnate flesh, separating the tares from the wheat and true believers from the false believers, which is to say, those who pursue the truth and those who do not. Those who claim to believe in God verbally but do not seek the truth or long for God's appearance, unbelievers who only seek grace and ask for bread to eat their fill, and those antichrists who hate the truth and resist God—all such people will be revealed, and they will eventually be cast out and punished. Although my boyfriend outwardly appeared to have good

humanity, be honest and reliable, and take good care of me, as soon as I told him God had returned in the second incarnation, not only did he refuse to seek the truth at all, he also blindly followed the pastor in obstructing and hindering me from accepting God's work of the last days, going so far as to threaten our marriage to force me to give up the true way. Although he believed in the Lord Jesus, he only held on to the Lord Jesus' name. He did not accept the truth expressed by the returned Lord, and he resisted and condemned Almighty God. I saw that his essence was to hate the truth and resist God, that he was an unbeliever revealed by God's word, and that he was not a person who truly believes in God, loves the truth, and accepts the truth. In the face of the truth, his satanic nature of resisting God was thoroughly exposed. He couldn't understand God's voice and is not God's sheep. If I chose to marry such a person, I would not be blessed by God, and our marriage would not be happy. From God's words, I understood God's will. I felt a sense of release, and I knew what to choose. After that, I called my boyfriend and said, "I've made up my mind. I choose to continue to follow Almighty God. If you want to break up, I respect your choice. We will go our separate ways." Frustrated, he said, "Can't you reconsider? We aren't all that young, and marriage is the most important thing in life. If you give up on our marriage, you will regret it later." I could already clearly see his essence of hatred of the truth and resistance to God, so no matter what he said, I didn't change my mind. I said, "Almighty God's words have pointed out the path in life for me, and I intend to resolutely walk it. My decision will never change." After I finished, I hung up the phone, and I felt a deep sense of ease and release.

It was the guidance of God's words that allowed me to know what path to choose in life, and also allowed me to see the true hypocritical faces of pastors and elders. They cry that we should watchfully await the coming of

the Lord, but when God appears in the flesh to work in the last days, they do not seek and investigate. Instead, they frantically condemn and resist, and try every means to prevent believers from investigating the true way and keep them under their control, and force believers to follow them in resisting and condemning God's coming. They are servants of evil and antichrists revealed by God's work in the last days, and they are demons that devour people's souls! Because my boyfriend worshiped the pastor too much, he didn't seek the truth at all, he followed the pastor in condemning and resisting God's work in the last days, and he became a person who believes in God yet resists God. I was grateful to God for saving me, allowing me to discern pastors and elders, reject them, and no longer to be deceived by them. That I could hear God's voice and welcome the Lord's return is God's great mercy and kindness for me. I thanked God from the bottom of my heart, and made up my mind to follow Almighty God to the end. Later, I performed my duty in the church, preaching the gospel and expending for God to the best of my abilities. I thank Almighty God's words for guiding me to make the right choice and leading me to where I am today. All glory to Almighty God!

82. Through Relentless Torture

By Wu Ming, China

One day in December of 2000, at around 5 in the afternoon, my wife and I were gathering at home with a brother and a sister when suddenly we heard a loud “bang bang bang” on the door. I rushed to hide our books. Then, six or seven police officers barged into the room. One of them yelled: “What are you doing? Are you having a gathering?” After he forced me to sign a search warrant, they ransacked the house, leaving everything in a complete mess. They found books of God’s word and two tape recorders. Deputy Chief surnamed Lyu of the Political Security Section came over to me with a few books of God’s word and said: “This is evidence for your arrest.” Then, they put us in a car. I prayed silently to God, “Oh God, You have allowed us to be caught today. No matter how the police torture me, I refuse to become a Judas and betray You!”

When we got to the police station, they interrogated us separately. One officer, surnamed Jin, asked me: “Who gave you those books in your house? Who converted you? Who is your leader?” I didn’t say a word, so he said cruelly: “Are you going to talk? If you don’t talk then you’re dead!” Seeing that I wasn’t going to talk, a police officer punched me viciously in the head a few times and then slapped me hard a couple times. I was seeing stars and my face stung awfully. He then stomped hard on my thigh a few times. Officer Jin smacked me in the face with a rolled-up magazine, and said viciously: “Let’s not waste time talking to him. Rope him up and let him see what we can do!” Then, a police officer brought over a rope, almost a quarter inch thick, and stripped off my outer clothing, leaving me with only thin long johns on. They grabbed my arms and pushed me to the ground, wrapped the rope around my neck, crossing it over my chest, then

tied up my arms, used the rope to tie my hands behind my back, and threaded it through the portion of the rope that was around my neck, then pulled it up hard. My shoulders were drawn painfully close to each other, and the thin rope dug into my flesh. My arms felt like they had broken, and I was in tremendous pain. They made me split my legs to 90 degrees and angle my head down with my waist also bent at 90 degrees. Before long, I felt dizzy and like my eyes were bulging out of my head. Sweat from my face kept dripping down, leaving the floor covered with it. I was tired and in pain, my body was shaking, and I couldn't stand on my legs. I wanted to bring my legs closer and rest for a moment, but if I moved slightly, Jin kicked me in the rear and ordered me not to move. The pain was unbearable. I was angry and full of hate, and I thought: "There are so many criminals that you don't go after. I believe in God and walk the right path, I don't break any laws, but you are torturing me. It's incredibly evil!" I thought of God's words that say: **"Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin!"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). I finally saw the CCP's ugly face for what it is. They say "freedom of religion" and "the people's police are for the people," but it's all lies! The Communist Party maintains the pretense of honoring freedom of belief, but in reality, they're ruthless with believers, and would love to wipe us all out. The Communist Party is Satan the devil that resists and hates God. I thought to myself, "The more they torture me, the more faith I will have, up until the very end!"

About half an hour later, my whole body felt weak and my head and eyes were swollen. My legs felt totally numb and I had lost feeling in my

arms and hands. My clothes were soaked through. That's when I heard Jin say: "You can't use the rope for more than half an hour, or else the arms become disabled." After he said that, they undid the rope. The moment they untied it, I slumped to the ground, my body aching all over. Then, two police grabbed my hands from either side and spun my arms in circles like they were spinning a big rope. My hands were in extreme pain after they'd spun them a few times. Jin asked me again: "Where did you get those books from? Who is your leader? Who converted you? Tell me now!" Then, Lyu said with insincere kindness: "Just tell us, it's not a big deal. If you tell us you won't have to suffer anymore." I thought: "Like I would ever sell out my brothers and sisters!" Exasperated that I wasn't talking, Jin said: "Put him back in the rope and let's see how long he can hold out!" They tied me up again. This time they tied me up tighter than before. The rope cut into the same places and it hurt even more than the first time. In my heart I kept praying to God, asking Him to give me faith and help me overcome the pain of the flesh. After half an hour, they saw I wasn't going to answer them and loosened the rope.

Around 12:30 at night, the police took me to a detention house. At the detention house, I only ate two meals a day, with each meal consisting of just a steamed bun and a tiny portion of vegetables. The buns were filled with pulped corn cob, half the vegetables were rotten, and the bottom of the bowl was all mud. Every day from six in the morning till eight at night, I had to sit cross-legged, except for meals and a half hour in the morning that I could go outside. If I moved even a little bit while I was sitting, someone would hit me. There was a gash across my shoulders from the rope torture back at the police station. The yellow liquid oozing from it seeped through my clothes, and my wrists had also begun to bleed and swell up until they were purplish red. All the joints in my body were in unbearable pain, and

even getting up to go to the bathroom was really hard. I felt like it wasn't a place suitable for humans and I didn't know when those dark days in prison would finally be over. These thoughts really tormented me. In the midst of my pain, I prayed to God over and over, asking Him to guide me, so that I could understand His will, be strong, and stand firm in my testimony. I thought of God's words: **"During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). Thinking on God's words was encouraging for me. I was in such a situation with God's permission. God was using that arduous environment to perfect my faith and love. He hoped that I could stand firm in my testimony and humiliate Satan. But if I wanted to escape after just suffering a little bit, what kind of testimony would that be? Even though I suffered from the police's torture, it helped me clearly see the Communist Party's demonic essence in its resistance of God so I could hate it and forsake it from the bottom of my heart, and no longer be deceived by it. It was God's salvation for me. I wasn't as miserable once I understood God's will. I vowed to myself: "No matter how much I suffer, I will continue to lean on God and stand firm in my testimony to Him."

One day, someone from Political Security Section came to interrogate me and I felt a little nervous. I didn't know what kind of torture they were going to use on me. I silently prayed to God and asked Him to protect my heart. In the interrogation room, Deputy Chief Lyu said insincerely: "Just come clean, once you tell us you can just go home. We went to your house. Your children are so young—it's so sad that there's nobody to take care of

them. Just tell us.” Hearing him mention my children was difficult to bear. I thought: “My wife and I were both arrested by the Communist Party, and now even our children are being implicated. How can they manage with nobody taking care of them at such a young age?” That’s when I thought of God’s words that say: **“At all times, My people should be on guard against the cunning schemes of Satan, guarding the gate of My house for Me ... so as to avoid falling into Satan’s trap, at which time it would be too late for regrets”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 3). I realized that this was Satan’s trick. The police were using my emotions to lure me into betraying God. I couldn’t fall for it. Then I thought of God’s words that say: **“Of everything that occurs in the universe, there is nothing in which I do not have the final say. Is there anything that is not in My hands?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 1). God rules over everything, and my children were in His hands. I was willing to entrust my children to God, and no matter what tricks the police used against me, I would stand firm and never become a Judas! Lyu kept asking me about the church and when I didn’t answer, Jin punched and kicked me, yelling as he hit me: “Don’t talk and I’ll beat you to death!” My head was spinning from the beating. Jin hit me for a while until he was out of breath, then he said ferociously: “Think you’ll be fine if you don’t talk? You’ll still get time! We have our ways to deal with you.” As he talked, he forcibly removed my coat, cotton shoes, and socks. He rolled up my pants to expose my calves, then dragged me to a big truck outside the interrogation room, then cuffed my hands to the door handle. The door was so high, my hands were over my head when cuffed to the handle. There was over a foot of snow on the ground. Jin cleared away about 10 square feet of snow around where I was standing, exposing sandy ground with a thin layer of ice on it. He made me stand on the ice in my

bare feet, and said fiercely: “If you don’t talk, you’ll be frozen half to death. You’ll be a cripple for the rest of your life!” Then he went inside.

That winter was especially cold. It was around 5 below zero outside. I felt chilled to the bone as soon as I was cuffed and where I was standing was particularly exposed to the blowing wind. I slowly lost feeling in my body. I kept praying to God in my heart: “God, I am leaving myself entirely in Your hands. Please give me faith and strength and the will to get through this suffering.” After I prayed, I silently sang a hymn of God’s words “**You Should Forsake All for the Truth**”:

1 You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do. ...

2 You should pursue all that is beautiful and good, and you should pursue a path in life that is more meaningful. If you lead such a vulgar life, and do not pursue any objectives, do you not waste your life? What can you gain from such a life? You should forsake all enjoyments of the flesh for the sake of one truth, and should not throw away all truths for the sake of a little enjoyment. People like this have no integrity or dignity; there is no meaning to their existence!

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment

I felt encouraged. I could not yield to Satan. Even if I froze to death that day, I would stand firm in my testimony to God! About half an hour later, a guard of the detention house passed by and saw me handcuffed to the truck door. As he walked over to the interrogation room, he yelled loudly: “You can’t interrogate people like this. We can’t take anyone half

frozen to death!” Shortly after the guard went inside, Jin and the others came out and dragged me back inside. By this point, my hands and feet had already lost feeling, my mouth was numb with cold, and my heart was fluttering. I sat on the floor for over an hour before I started to slowly warm back up. Lyu saw me in pain and gloated: “You’re worse than thieves—at least they have skill. You people go through so much pain just to believe in God, it’s truly not worth it. You’ll still be sentenced even if you don’t talk.” Hearing that really enraged me. These police officers turn the truth on its head. They think the crime of theft is a skill but treat us believers who walk the right path like criminals, like their mortal enemies who should be tortured so inhumanely! Looking at their vile faces, I cursed them in my heart. Finally, they saw I wasn’t going to talk, so they sent me back to the cell.

That night, my feet were itchy and in pain, and blisters started to form on them. They were covered with blood blisters the next morning, like I’d been burnt with scalding water. One emerged after another, with the big ones as big as egg yolks and the small ones as big as fingertips. I couldn’t walk at all, and I wanted to scratch them, but I didn’t dare. When the blood blisters broke, they just stuck to my socks. My calves were completely numb and itchy. I came down with a fever and my face got really flushed. By the third day, my feet had become infected and they were so swollen I couldn’t even fit into the biggest slippers. My calves had swollen to twice their normal size, and my ankles were all black and purple. Afraid of being held responsible, the guards sent me to the hospital. The doctor said my right ankle was infected and festering, and that I needed to be operated on. In the operating room, I overheard the doctor say to the other staff there: “We had another prisoner like this a couple days ago. His leg was infected the same way, then he died from osteomyelitis.” It scared me to hear the

doctor say that. My feet were infected and I couldn't even walk. Would I get osteomyelitis too? If I did, I'd end up either dead or disabled. Then what would I do? I was still so young and my whole family depended on me. The more I thought the more I suffered, and then I recalled a hymn of God's words titled **"How to Be Perfected"**: **"When you face suffering, you must be able to lay aside concern for the flesh and to not make complaints against God. When God hides Himself from you, you must be able to have the faith to follow Him, to maintain your previous love without allowing it to falter or dissipate. No matter what God does, you must submit to His design and be prepared to curse your own flesh rather than make complaints against Him. When you are faced with trials, you must satisfy God, though you may weep bitterly or feel reluctant to part with some beloved object. Only this is true love and faith"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). God's words gave me faith and strength. When faced with suffering, God wants me to have faith and to persevere so that I can stand firm in my testimony. Thinking about the past few times I was tortured, I thought that I had a lot of faith. When I saw that I had been so badly injured by the cold, I started to worry about my life and my future. I was afraid of dying, and of losing function in my legs. My stature was truly small. I didn't show true faith or submission to God at all. Thinking about these things, I prayed to God: "Oh God! I don't want to think about myself anymore. I will obey Your orchestrations and arrangements, and even if I die, I will still stand firm and satisfy You." While in the hospital, the police kept me handcuffed to the bed the whole time. They only let me free to use the bathroom and to eat. One day when I went to the bathroom, two female patients passed by and asked what crime I'd committed. Jin said, "He's a

rapist!” The women looked at me with contempt. I was outraged. The police are always distorting the truth and making up lies!

The swelling in my legs went down after a couple weeks, but I still limped when I walked. The guards brought me back to the detention house. One day, three new police officers came to interrogate me. Seeing me hooked up to an IV, they said viciously: “Take that out! You’re too kind to him, letting him use an IV. It’s nice enough you’ve let him live at all!” Furious, I thought to myself: “Those demons, freezing me half to death then saying they’re too kind. They’re truly cruel and merciless!”

In the interrogation room, an officer said: “Your case is in our Criminal Police Brigade’s hands now. Political Security Section may not be able to deal with you, but we always have our ways!” Seeing each of their wicked, hideous faces made me nervous and I started sweating. I had heard that the Criminal Police Brigade was in charge of major cases. They were especially cruel and ruthless in their torture methods. I didn’t know how they would torture me. Would I be able to get through it? I quickly prayed to God to give me faith and the resolve to take the suffering. Then the officer said: “We always get even the toughest guys to confess in here. The Criminal Police Brigade specializes in punishing people. We don’t care if you believers in Almighty God live or die, so just hurry up and come clean!” I said: “I have nothing to say.” Enraged, he slapped me hard in the face with one hand and then the other. I was in a daze. The only things I could feel were my face in terrible pain with blood trickling from the corners of my mouth, and that my mouth and my face had swollen up. Looking at how burly they all were and how brutal they could be, I felt pretty worried: “If this goes on, will they beat me to the point of disability, or death? If I can’t take the torture and sell out, then I’ll be a Judas.” I quickly came before God and prayed. After I prayed, I thought of a sentence from God’s words:

“Faith is like a single log bridge: Those who cling abjectly to life will have difficulty in crossing it, but those who are ready to sacrifice themselves can pass over, sure of foot and worry-free” (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 6). God’s words gave me faith and I resolved: “No matter how badly they beat me today, I will not become a Judas!” They slapped my face and kicked me hard a few more times. Then, they put me back in the rope like last time. But this time was even worse. They pulled my arms behind my back and yanked up hard on the rope. It felt like my arms were breaking and it hurt terribly. Half an hour later, my hands were bruised black and purple, and they untied me when they saw I was on my last legs. After another half an hour, seeing that my wrists had recovered a bit, they put me back in the rope for a second time. This time they brought a mop. They stuck its handle behind the rope around the back of my neck and twisted it around twice so the rope was even tighter on my arms and shoulders. One of the officers was sitting on a chair and holding the mop behind me, pushing it down hard. My arms were in unbearable pain and it felt like they were going to break. While he pushed down on the mop, he kept asking me: “How many of you are there? Who is your leader?” When they saw that I wasn’t going to answer, they brought three beer bottles and shoved them under my arms. It felt like my arms were being pulled down and the pain was so piercing that I almost passed out. I just kept praying to God and asking Him to give me strength. Then two officers walked over to either side of me, lifted up my shirt, and then used the opening of a water bottle to scrape hard along my ribs. It hurt so badly I screamed. An officer yelled at me: “You’re in pain, so why don’t you ask your God to come save you, huh? If you’re in so much pain just talk!” All the while they were scraping hard back and forth on my ribs until they broke the skin. It was agonizing. They then pressed my head down

hard and said in exasperation: “If it’s not working, let’s take him somewhere where nobody’s around and beat him to death. Better to be a thief than one of those believers in God. A little suffering’s worth it if you get some cash!” Then, an officer said: “Just talk, this suffering isn’t worth it. If you talk it’ll all be over.” I felt like my body had reached its limit, and I thought: “What if I just tell them something that isn’t important? Maybe I can suffer a bit less.” But then I realized that if I said something, I’d be a Judas and betraying God. I couldn’t say a thing. I kept praying to God: “Oh God! I really can’t stand it anymore. Give me strength and protect me so that I can continue to stand firm in my testimony.” After I prayed, I thought of God’s words: **“During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). God’s words restored my strength. I could feel His constant guidance by my side. No matter how much I suffered, I would lean on God and get through it. I prayed to Him: “God, You know how much I can handle. No matter how they torture me, I won’t betray You. If I really can’t handle any more pain, I’d rather die than become a Judas.”

After the second round, I sat slumped on the ground. I’d barely recovered when an officer pulled me up by the collar and pushed me against a wall. He throttled my neck really hard and said savagely: “I’ll strangle you today!” Hardly able to breathe, I used all my strength to push him away from me. He stepped back and looked stunned. I also felt like it was surprising. After a month of torture, I was quite frail. That day I had already been through some torture and I had no strength left. I hadn’t imagined I’d

still be able to push him off. I knew that it was God helping me and giving me strength. They kept torturing me until after one in the afternoon. One of the criminal officers said, enraged: “You’re so stubborn. We’ll keep going tomorrow and we’ll see how long you can hold out. If you don’t talk, we’ll interrogate you every day until you do!” At night I was lying on my bunk, bruised all over. The skin around my ribs was all cut up and it hurt to even breathe. My arms hurt so much that I couldn’t even take off my shirt. I lifted up my collar and saw that the wounds on my shoulders that had healed were back. My wrists had blood marks from the impression of the rope. Those demons would do anything, no matter how cruel, to force me to betray God and sell out my brothers and sisters. They were eager to kill me. They were a gang of truth-hating, God-hating demons! I thought about how the officer said they would continue interrogating me again the next day and I felt pangs of cowardice and fear: “Will the torture be even worse tomorrow? Will they torture me to death? These evil police won’t rest until I’ve told them about the church. But if I talk, I’ll be a Judas betraying God, and if I don’t talk, then it’s very likely that I’ll be tortured to death.” I prayed again and again to God: “Oh God, my stature is too small, I really can’t get through this torture all by myself, but I don’t want to be a Judas and betray You. Please help me and guide me.” After praying, I thought of God’s words: **“Toward those who showed Me not the slightest loyalty during times of tribulation, I shall be merciful no more, for My mercy only extends so far. I have no liking, furthermore, for anyone who has once betrayed Me, much less do I like to associate with those who sell out the interests of their friends. This is My disposition, regardless of who the person may be. I must tell you this: Anyone who breaks My heart shall not receive clemency from Me a second time, and anyone who has been faithful to Me shall forever remain in My heart”** (The Word,

Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). I thought on those words repeatedly. I knew that God's disposition is righteous and tolerates no offense. If I betrayed God and sold out my brothers and sisters to avoid suffering, then I would be offending God's disposition and I would ultimately suffer punishment. I thought about this whole experience. If it weren't for God's words guiding me, I wouldn't have been able to get through the police's brutal torture. That I am still alive is due to God's protection. My life and death are in God's hands. Without God's permission, Satan cannot take my life. With that in mind, I had the determination to give my all to stand firm in my testimony to God. To my surprise, once I had the confidence to face the next interrogation, they didn't come back. A month or so later, Lyu notified me: "Your case is closed. You've been given a year. Your family has arranged bail pending trial. Once you get home, you have to stay put for a year. When you're called in, you have to show up at a moment's notice."

After my release, in order to avoid police surveillance, I had to leave home to fulfill my duty in other places. That arrest and persecution by the CCP helped me clearly see the demonic essence of its hatred and resistance of God. I hated it deeply. I also really felt God's love and salvation for me. When I became nearly unable to handle any more suffering from the torture, God was always with me, watching over and protecting me, and using His words to guide me and give me faith and strength so that I could overcome those devils' cruelty and have the determination to pledge my life to God and stand firm in my testimony to Him. Thanks be to God!

83. The Consequences of Working Willfully

By Zhao Yang, China

I was elected to serve as a church leader in 2016. When I first took on that duty, I felt a lot of pressure because I didn't understand the truth and didn't have insight into things, so when brothers and sisters ran into problems, I wasn't sure how to fellowship on the truth to resolve them. I didn't know how to consider the truth principles when I was appointing or selecting people to certain duties either, so I prayed to God while I sought those principles. I also sought co-workers out when I didn't understand something well. Over time, I made some progress in my ability to assess people and situations, and I was able to assign brothers and sisters to fitting duties based on their personal strengths. One time, a brother I worked with tried to talk to me about Sister Xia Jing, a team leader, who was muddling through her duty and being really passive. He said she was holding up the team's work and suggested replacing her. I thought to myself, "Xia Jing has great caliber and is really capable in her work, so even though she has a corrupt disposition, if she got a little more help, and could turn herself around and make some changes, then she'd have no problem in her duty." So I exposed and dissected Xia Jing's state, and I pruned and dealt with her. After a few sessions of fellowship, I saw that her attitude toward her duty had changed a bit. She was taking more initiative and was more conscientious. After a little while she was promoted to a more important duty. I was really patting myself on the back after that, thinking, "I was the one with the right idea. It's a good thing we didn't dismiss her, we've managed to foster a talented person in the church. It seems I've got some sense of discernment." From then on, I stopped discussing appointments and dismissals with that brother, thinking that I was more experienced, so I

could handle any issues on my own. Two years just flew by, and I became more and more adept at making arrangements for the church's work. Thinking I had discernment and some insight into people and things, I was becoming more and more arrogant.

One day a letter came from a leader saying that our church's Sister Zhang Jiayi had come back after being dismissed from her duty at another church. I needed to arrange for her to attend gatherings. I thought, "From my previous interactions with Jiayi, I saw she was arrogant, she tended to scold people condescendingly, and was hard to get along with. It seems she hasn't really changed." Then a little while later, so many newcomers were joining our church that we urgently needed people to take on watering work. Brother Liu Zheng, who worked alongside me, said he'd been in a gathering with Jiayi and found that she'd gained some real self-knowledge and also some repentance since being dismissed, plus she'd watered new members before and was pretty effective. He suggested that we have her do some watering while continuing her self-reflection, so that our work wasn't delayed. The moment I heard him suggest Jiayi, I thought, "How could that work? You don't really know her, she isn't someone who pursues the truth. You just heard her talk about some understanding, and think she has repented. Your ability to assess people and situations is poor and you don't have the slightest bit of discernment." I said to him firmly, "I know Jiayi. She has an arrogant disposition and tends to come down on people condescendingly. She's also hard to work with. She has always been like this, and there's no way that she's changed, otherwise she wouldn't have been dismissed. I don't think she's a good fit. We can't let her take on that duty." Liu Zheng went on to say, "We can't be too demanding. She is a little arrogant, but she's really learned about herself through this experience of being dismissed and she's been able to repent for the things she's done.

Now she's low-key in the way she speaks and gets along fine with others. There has been some change in her arrogant disposition. We need to treat people appropriately." I felt kind of annoyed when I heard him say this. I thought that he was new to that duty, so what did he know? He should just go along with me. So I responded, more emphatically, "I don't just casually make up my mind about people, but I can see she's not a good fit for that duty and we shouldn't have her do watering." Liu Zheng didn't say anything more, seeing that I was completely set on my opinion.

A little time passed, and because of a lack of people doing watering, some of the newcomers were weak and negative because they hadn't received watering in time, and they were not coming to gatherings. When a leader found out what was going on, she and Liu Zheng went to talk to Jiayi. When they came back, Liu Zheng said to me, "Although Jiayi has been dismissed, she is just arrogant, and has not done any great evil. Now she has some self-knowledge and is willing to repent and change. She can still be cultivated. We can't define someone forever by what they do for a time, but give them a chance to repent. We've discussed it, and Jiayi should take on watering work." Hearing them recommend Jiayi for this promotion again, I thought, "I've made myself perfectly clear last time, and how could she possibly have changed after so little time? I've been serving as a leader for a long time and I know how to assess people, so why don't you take my word for it? That way you can't go wrong!" So, I explained my position again, very emphatically. Seeing how stubbornly I was clinging to my own idea, the leader said to me sternly, "We've understood Jiayi. We've listened to her fellowship, have made real contact with her, and we have seen that she has some self-reflection and self-knowledge. We should give people a chance to repent. We can't define people based on their past behaviors. You say she's arrogant, but since when were arrogant people not allowed to be

nurtured in God's house? Jiayi is well-suited for watering work and there's an urgent need for this right now. You're sticking to your guns and insisting that she's not used. Isn't this willful and dictatorial? Assigning people within the church needs to go through you. They can't perform a duty without your approval. You're too arrogant and self-righteous. By doing whatever you please, can't you see you're directly holding up the work of the church and its cultivation of talented people?" Hearing the leader deal with me this way was upsetting for me, but I was still kind of resistant to it. I thought, "I have a good sense of people, so there's no way I'm wrong about Jiayi." At that time, I couldn't keep on disagreeing. So I reluctantly said, "Since you've both seen some change in her, let's give her a chance at watering. We'll switch her out if it's not working."

Back at home, I thought about the leader dealing with me and felt really upset. Based on what she said, wasn't I doing evil and resisting God? This was very serious in its essence! But then I thought that I had considered my decision not to appoint Jiayi to that post, so why did they say that about me? Where on earth had I gone wrong? So I prayed to God in seeking: "God, I'm having a hard time accepting being pruned and dealt with. I don't know how to understand myself in this or which aspect of the truth to enter into. Please show me the way." I read these words from God after my prayer: **"What does it mean to be 'arbitrary and rash'? It means to act however you see fit when you encounter an issue, without any process of thinking or searching. Nothing anyone else says can touch your heart or change your mind. You can't even accept it when the truth is fellowshiped to you, you stick to your own opinions, not listening when other people say anything right, believing yourself right, and clinging to your own ideas. Even if your thinking is correct, you should take other people's opinions into consideration as well. And if**

you don't at all, is this not being extremely self-righteous? It is not easy for people who are extremely self-righteous and willful to accept the truth. If you do something wrong and others criticize you, saying, 'You're not doing it according to the truth!' you reply, 'Even if I'm not, this is still how I'm going to do it,' and then you find some reason to make them think this is right. If they reproach you, saying, 'You acting like this is disruptive, and it will damage the work of the church,' not only do you not listen, but you keep coming out with excuses: 'I think this is the right way, so this is how I'm going to do it.' What disposition is this? (Arrogance.) It is arrogance. An arrogant nature makes you willful. If you have an arrogant nature, you will behave arbitrarily and rashly, heedless of what anyone says" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). **"How you are to treat others is clearly shown or hinted at in God's words; the attitude with which God treats humanity is the attitude people should adopt in their treatment of one another. How does God treat each and every person? Some people are of immature stature; or are young; or have believed in God for only a short time; or are not bad by nature essence, not malicious, but are just a bit ignorant or lacking in caliber. Or they are subject to too many constraints, and are yet to understand the truth, yet to have life entry, so it is difficult for them to keep from doing foolish things or committing ignorant acts. But God does not fixate on people's passing foolishness; He looks only at their hearts. If they are resolved to pursue the truth, they are then correct, and when this is their objective, then God is observing them, waiting for them, and giving them time and opportunities that allow them to enter. It is not the case that God will write them off over a single transgression. That is something people often do; God never treats people like that. If God does not treat people**

in that way, then why do people treat others in that way? Does this not show their corrupt disposition? This is precisely their corrupt disposition. You have to look at how God treats ignorant and foolish people, how He treats those with immature stature, how He treats the normal manifestations of humanity's corrupt disposition, and how He treats those who are malicious. God treats different people in different ways, and He also has various ways of managing different people's myriad conditions. You must understand these truths. Once you have understood these truths, you will then know how to experience matters and treat people according to principles" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Gain the Truth, One Must Learn From the People, Matters, and Things Nearby). I started to reflect on myself based on what God's words revealed. I thought that I had some overall experience with selecting and appointing people and had a grasp of some principles. Especially when someone I'd chosen was successful in their duty, I really felt like I had discernment and could assess people and situations. I considered this to be my capital, felt very self-congratulatory, and didn't listen to anyone else's suggestions. When Liu Zheng urged me to treat Jiayi fairly, I just refused to listen to him. I just put her in a box based on how I'd seen her before, thinking she was arrogant and couldn't possibly change, so she couldn't take on watering work. In fact, the requirements of God's house are clear: As long as someone can understand the truths of vision and have responsibility in their duty, they can be cultivated and trained. Even for those people who commit really serious transgressions, if they can accept the truth, if they can repent and change, they will still be given the opportunity to continue to perform a duty. God's house has always treated people justly and fairly. No matter what kind of corrupt disposition someone shows or what they've done to disrupt the work of the church, as long as they're not an evil person or an

antichrist, God will save as much as He can, and the church will give them opportunities to do a duty and let them practice. This is God's love and salvation. I didn't understand God's disposition or God's intention in saving man, nor did I understand the principles of how people are treated in God's house. I wasn't looking at Jiayi's strengths, but was just refusing to let go of the corruption she'd exposed in the past, arbitrarily defining her and refusing to assign her to watering newcomers. That led to new believers not being watered in time and it was disruptive to the work of the church. Wasn't that doing evil? Full of regret, I came before God and prayed, "God, I'm so arrogant and self-righteous. I don't want to be willful in my duty anymore. I'm ready to repent and change."

Then the next time I was in a gathering with Jiayi and heard her fellowship. She genuinely had some self-knowledge and some regret, and I felt even more ashamed and guilty. After Jiayi took on watering work, she was earnest and took on responsibility for it, and the brothers and sisters she watered made some progress. She was later promoted to manage the watering work for several churches. Seeing how well she was doing in her duty left me feeling even more abashed. I hated how arrogant I'd been, how I'd just arbitrarily defined her, refusing to assign her to a duty and holding up the work of the church. I realized that I didn't possess the truth and couldn't assess people and situations. I had understood some doctrines and rules from all of my experience, but the church's work can't be done well just by relying on those. After that incident, I approached selecting people with more caution, and when my willfulness reared its head and I wanted final say, I made sure to pray and forsake myself and listen more to what everyone else had to say. I thought that I'd made some changes, but to my surprise, something happened later on that exposed me again.

Six months later, the church urgently needed two people for the work of general affairs. I looked into it and found a couple of sisters who were responsible and could cope with various situations, but there were some security risks with them. But then I figured that since they weren't going to be doing a duty in their local area, there shouldn't be any problem with having them take that on. Someone was urgently needed for the work, and for the moment there were no better candidates, so I decided to use them for the time being and switch them out when someone better came along. So I told Liu Zheng that I wanted to have Sister Zhao Aizhen attend to general affairs in the church. His response was, "We absolutely have to follow the principles when selecting people. They can't work for the church if there's a safety concern. Aizhen is a security risk and is not suitable for this work. We've got to go by the principles." Seeing that he wasn't on board, I disagreed with him, saying, "We don't have to stress too much about that. Don't you think you're being too fearful? It is true that she's well-known as a believer in her hometown, but it's been years since the police have checked up on her. Besides, she has courage and wisdom. I know this about her. I don't think we have a better candidate at this point. Our general affairs are in need of personnel. We can't blindly follow rules." He heard me out, and then insisted, "Appointing someone to this work who presents a risk violates the principles. We have to put safety first." I completely disregarded what he was saying and insisted on using Aizhen. After that, I arranged for another sister who also posed a safety risk to work on general affairs. Before long Aizhen, because she was well-known for believing in God, came under suspicion and surveillance from the CCP police. As she was frequently visiting the homes of some brothers and sisters, these brothers and sisters were also put under surveillance, and could not perform their duties normally. The work of the church was greatly obstructed.

When the leader learned about this and found out that it had been caused by my insistence on appointing someone with safety risks, she dealt with me very sternly: “You are too arrogant and willful. You always act arbitrarily in your duty, and go against principles. This time it’s done serious damage to the work of the church. Isn’t that serving as Satan’s minion and disrupting the work of the church? Based on your consistent behavior, we’ve decided to dismiss you.” Hearing this was really a smack in the face, leaving me utterly stunned. I thought, “It’s over. I’ve done a great evil. What if the brothers and sisters that have been implicated are arrested? If they are, I really have done a horrible thing.” I got more afraid the more I thought about it. I was racked with guilt. It felt like a knife to the heart, and I didn’t have the motivation to do anything at all. I was living in this misery day in and day out, praying to God and acknowledging my wrongdoing over and over: “God, I’m too arrogant, too conceited. My willfulness has done incredible damage to the work of the church. I’m ready to accept any punishment You want to give me, just please protect those brothers and sisters from arrest.” I found out later that those church members had been transferred in time, and escaped capture. I could finally breathe a sigh of relief.

After the fact, I reflected on myself. Why was I always so willful in my duty? Where did that really come from? I read in God’s word: **“If, in your heart, you truly understand the truth, then you will know how to practice the truth and obey God, and will naturally embark on the path of pursuing the truth. If the path you walk is the right one, and in line with God’s will, then the work of the Holy Spirit will not leave you—in which case there will be less and less chance of you betraying God. Without the truth, it is easy to do evil, and you will do it despite yourself. For example, if you have an arrogant and conceited**

disposition, then being told not to oppose God makes no difference, you can't help yourself, it is beyond your control. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature. Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account; they would cause you to exalt yourself, constantly put yourself on display; they would make you scorn others, they would leave no one in your heart but yourself; they would rob you of God's place in your heart, and ultimately cause you to sit in the place of God and demand that people submit to you, and make you venerate your own thoughts, ideas, and notions as the truth. So much evil is done by people under the dominance of their arrogant and conceited nature!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). I saw from God's words that behaving arbitrarily in my duty over and over came from being controlled by an arrogant, self-conceited nature. With this arrogant and self-conceited nature, I always thought too much of myself and felt that I was better than everyone else, that I was right more than anyone, so I should have final say on matters in the church. Once I set my mind on something, I refused to see it any other way, and I wouldn't listen to anyone. I even wanted people to obey my ideas as if they were the truth principles. I knew that those two sisters were safety risks and weren't suitable for the work of general affairs, and I myself had qualms about it, but I still just couldn't put myself aside and seek God's will. I disregarded the Holy Spirit's reproaches and guidance, and I did not listen to the dissuasion of Liu Zheng. I had to have my own way, and in the end I did really serious harm to the work of the church. If only I had had the slightest desire to seek the truth and submit, if only I had listened to Liu Zheng's suggestions, there wouldn't have been such terrible consequences. I felt so

much regret and self-blame when I realized all of this, and I hated my arrogance and willfulness. The Communist Party never stops trying to undermine God's work, using all sorts of tactics to oppress and arrest His chosen people. And I had arbitrarily violated the principles, deciding to appoint unsafe people to take on duties, which led to other brothers and sisters being put under surveillance. Was this not being an accomplice of Satan? If those brothers and sisters had been arrested and imprisoned, the consequences would have been terrible! This thought scared me more and more. I saw that the consequences of acting on an arrogant disposition were very great. I had done some work and thought that I was great, so I didn't think much of other people, and I didn't have God in my heart. I wasn't even taking the truth principles seriously, and used whatever work I had done as my capital. I just did whatever I wanted. I was arrogant to the point that I'd lost all reason. I thought about all of those antichrists who had been expelled from the church. They were incredibly arrogant, dictatorial and arbitrary in their duty, and seriously disrupted the work of the church. Ultimately, they did so much evil that they were removed from the church. If my arrogant disposition wasn't resolved, I could not help but do evil and resist God, and in the end would be cast out by God. I felt in my heart how terrible it was to live by an arrogant disposition. Even though I'd committed such a great evil, the church still hadn't expelled me, but had just dismissed me. God had even enlightened and guided me with His words, giving me a chance to reflect on and know myself, to repent and change. I could really feel God's love and I had so much regret. I felt ready to repent and change.

After that, I started consciously seeking how to solve the problem of having an arrogant disposition, arbitrariness and willfulness in my duty. I read this passage of God's words: **"How, then, do you resolve your arbitrariness and rashness? Say, for example, something happens to**

you and you have your own ideas and plans. Before determining what to do, you must seek the truth, and you should at least fellowship with everyone about what you think and believe about that matter, asking everyone to tell you if your thoughts are correct and in line with the truth, and to carry out checks for you. This is the best method for solving arbitrariness and rashness. First, you can shed light on your views and seek the truth—this is the first step of practice for solving arbitrariness and rashness. The second step happens when other people voice dissenting opinions—how can you practice in order to keep from being arbitrary and rash? You must first have an attitude of humility, set aside what you believe to be right, and let everyone fellowship. Even if you believe your way to be correct, you should not keep insisting on it. That is a kind of step forward; it shows an attitude of seeking the truth, of denying yourself, and of satisfying God's will. Once you have this attitude, at the same time as not adhering to your own opinions, you should pray, seek the truth from God, and then look for a basis in God's words—determine how to act based on God's words. This is the most suitable and accurate practice. When you seek the truth and hold up a problem for everyone to fellowship and seek on together, that is when the Holy Spirit provides enlightenment. God enlightens people according to principles, He takes stock of their attitude. If you stubbornly stick to your guns regardless of whether your view is right or wrong, God will hide His face from you and ignore you; He will make you hit a wall, He will expose you and reveal your ugly state. If, on the other hand, your attitude is correct, neither insistent on your own way, nor self-righteous, nor arbitrary and rash, but an attitude of seeking and of accepting the truth, if you fellowship with everyone, then the Holy Spirit will begin to work among you, and perhaps He will

lead you to understanding by means of someone's words. Sometimes, when the Holy Spirit enlightens you, He leads you to understand the crux of a matter with just a few words or phrases, or by giving you an idea. You realize, in that instant, that whatever you have been clinging to is erroneous, and, in the same instant, you understand the most appropriate way to act. Having reached such a level, have you not successfully avoided doing evil, and at the same time avoided bearing the consequences of a mistake? Is this not God's keeping? (Yes.) How is such a thing achieved? This is only attained when you have a God-fearing heart, and when you seek the truth with a heart of obedience. Once you have received the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and determined the principles for practice, your practice will be in line with the truth, and you will be able to satisfy God's will" (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). After reading this, I understood that to resolve arrogance and willfulness, what's most important is to have a God-fearing heart and a truth-seeking attitude. I can't insist on my own perspective when things come up, but I need to discuss things with my brothers and sisters. If we work together harmoniously, God's guidance will be obtained. If somebody has a different opinion, I should accept it first, then pray to God, seek the truth, and put the principles into practice. If I stubbornly cling to my own thinking, there's no way for me to gain the Holy Spirit's work. I won't have insight into anything and I'll be disruptive in my duty. I thought over how I'd done such a great evil because I was so arrogant, and because I didn't have a place for God in my heart. It came from wanting to be lord and master of everything, from not working well with others. Realizing this, I silently resolved to stop being so stubborn when things came up, but to seek the truth principles and communicate

more with others. I would listen to whoever's idea was in line with the truth principles.

After that, I was elected as team leader, in charge of watering work. I was really grateful and I treasured that duty. I was constantly warning myself that I absolutely had to learn the lesson from my failure, and that I couldn't let my arrogant nature make me willful anymore. When problems came up, I would take the initiative to seek out brothers and sisters to discuss things with them. One time I got a letter from a leader saying we needed to find some people suited to doing watering work. Looking into it, I felt that Sister Su Xing was a good fit, but according to the others' former assessments, she had an arrogant nature and wouldn't accept brothers' and sisters' pointers and help. At this, I figured that she wouldn't accept the truth, so she wasn't someone who should be cultivated. As I thought on this, I realized that I was arbitrarily defining someone again, and I remembered something God said: **"If a person does not reach their own verdicts, it is a sign that they are not self-righteous; if they do not insist on their own ideas, it is a sign that they have sense. If they can also submit, then they have achieved practice of the truth"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Submission to God Is a Basic Lesson in Gaining the Truth). I knew I couldn't insist on having final say again, but I had to talk this over with the brother who worked with me and listen to his suggestions. When I explained my position to him, he responded, "Based on these assessments, it does look like Su Xing is really arrogant, but this is all based on corruption she revealed in the past. We don't know if she's gained any self-knowledge. We shouldn't stifle a talented person, so let's have her write out a self-reflection and then ask for the opinions of the brothers and sisters who are in close contact with her. We can take a look at all of this and see if she is a good candidate for this duty. This approach is a better bet." It sounded to me like

his suggestion fit the truth principles. If I defined her as someone unfit for being fostered based on a few brothers' and sisters' former opinions alone, that would be too arbitrary. We should take a look at what sort of arrogance she had. If it was unreasonable, blind arrogance and an absolute refusal to accept the truth, then she really shouldn't be promoted. If she was arrogant, but had good humanity, and could accept the truth, and she could learn about herself and change after being pruned and dealt with, that would be normal revelation of corruption. We cannot treat different things as the same. When we received Su Xing's own self-reflection and other brothers' and sisters' assessments, we saw that she'd made some changes and had some entry, and she was someone who could accept the truth. We recommended her for that watering work. Ever since then, I haven't performed my duties so arrogantly and stubbornly as before, I don't just make decisions on my own, but consciously listen to others' suggestions and seek the truth principles. With this kind of practice, I feel at peace and free of qualms. I've been able to have this change entirely thanks to reading God's words.

84. Stick to the Principles to Do a Duty Well

By Xu Nuo, China

In August 2019, Sister Lin Xin, a leader of a church, wrote a resignation letter. My leader arranged for me to go to this church to investigate. She said if Lin Xin really couldn't do practical work, she should be dismissed and there should be a new election. After I arrived, the deacons there told me about Lin Xin's situation, saying that as soon as anything involved her family interests or personal affairs, she put aside church work and left everything for her partnered sister to handle. This gave her partner a heavy workload, and follow-up on the work wasn't being done well. There were some urgent matters that were not being promptly resolved. The superior leaders had offered help and support to Lin Xin many times, but she hadn't changed and things couldn't be turned around. She didn't have any enlightenment in her fellowship on God's word at gatherings, and when the brothers and sisters had problems or difficulties, she couldn't fellowship on the truth to resolve them, she could only encourage them with words and doctrines, or she used her own methods and worldly philosophies to solve things. For example, if a brother or sister was in a poor spiritual state because of illness, she would only tell them what doctors to visit and what health products to take, rather than guiding them to seek God's will, and learn a lesson. Also, when some people talked about investments during gatherings, Lin Xin not only lacked the discernment to expose and stop them, she actually took part and invited her brothers and sisters to do so as well. Some brothers and sisters had reminded her many times to focus on pursuing the truth and fulfilling her duties, but she didn't listen. Fearing her brothers and sisters would say she lusts for money, she had invested in secret and lost over 400,000 yuan, which distracted her even

more from her duties. Lin Xin was neglecting her duties and not doing practical work, so church life there was ineffective, and the brothers and sisters felt negative and weak. Some of them no longer wanted to come to gatherings, and she herself feared meeting the brothers and sisters, because she was unable to resolve their problems.

After hearing the deacons' report of the situation, I thought, "Lin Xin doesn't pursue the truth or do practical work, and her views on things are like an unbeliever. How can she lead a church like that? Even without her resignation letter, she should be dismissed as a false leader for her behavior." So, I found the relevant principle and, based on that and her behavior, fellowshiped on discernment. When I finished, all the deacons confirmed that Lin Xin lacked the Holy Spirit's work. But when I talked about dismissing Lin Xin from her duties, one of the deacons said, "Lin Xin has good humanity, she helps her brothers and sisters with whatever difficulties she can, and she is friendly and unpretentious." One said she had good caliber, was clever, and when the brothers and sisters were in a poor state or had some difficulty, she could comfort them. If she was dismissed, the church wouldn't be able to find a more suitable leader. Another deacon also said, "Lin Xin might just temporarily be in a bad state. Let's try to help her first." They discussed it back and forth and all agreed that she shouldn't be dismissed. According to the principles for replacing leaders and workers, if a leader or worker doesn't receive the Holy Spirit's work and can't do practical work for long periods, they should be replaced. If they lack the Holy Spirit's work and we keep them, aren't we singing a different tune to God? These deacons only saw that Lin Xin could care for people, that she considered their physical interests, was loving to a degree, and had some smarts and caliber, but they couldn't see whether she was someone who pursued the truth, or whether she could do practical work. They weren't

evaluating her using the standards of God's house for selecting people. Lin Xin was obviously someone who didn't pursue the truth and held views just like those of unbelievers. She didn't fellowship on the truth when things happened and she couldn't resolve her brothers' and sisters' practical problems of life entry at all. She had been revealed as a false leader. If she remained in her duties, she would only disrupt and obstruct church work and delay her brothers' and sisters' life entry. So once again I fellowshiped with the deacons on the matter of replacing her. After my fellowship, the deacons were all silent, but I could see they still didn't agree with dismissing her. At that point, I hesitated, "If I insist on my viewpoint here and continue fellowshiping on the truth and discerning Lin Xin, will these deacons say I am too arrogant and arbitrary and don't accept other people's opinions? If I spoil my relationship with these deacons after just arriving, the rest of my work will be harder." When I thought of this, I stopped fellowshiping with the deacons on the principles of discerning false leaders, and I reported the church's situation to the leader above me. I thought if the leader agreed with my point of view, then I could dismiss Lin Xin, and those deacons wouldn't have any bad opinions of me. After that, I went to other sisters at that church to learn their views of Lin Xin, but I discovered that these sisters also lacked discernment of her. They all said she had good humanity, was loving toward them, was considerate of their difficulties, and was clever and had caliber. Their view was the same as the deacons'. When I saw this, I didn't dare fellowship on the truth to discern Lin Xin. I feared they would say I was arrogant, self-righteous, and ignored others' views, and that they would have a bad impression of me. So, I just passively waited for my leader's letter with the answer. That way, I wasn't burdened with the matter of Lin Xin's dismissal. I clearly saw that these brothers and sisters lacked the truth and couldn't discern, but I had no desire to

fellowship with them. During those days, I felt darkness inside, and I couldn't feel the presence of God. So I quickly went before God and prayed to ask for His enlightenment and guidance so that I could know my state.

After a few days, my leader asked to gather with me. We read a passage of God's words: **"In the house of God, you must grasp the principle of every duty you perform, no matter what it is, and be able to practice the truth. That is what it is to be principled. If something is not clear to you, if you are not sure what the appropriate thing to do is, seek out fellowship to achieve consensus. Once it has been determined what is most beneficial to the church's work and to the brothers and sisters, do that. Do not be bound by rules, don't delay, do not wait, do not be a passive observer. If you are always an observer and never have an opinion of your own, if you always wait until someone else has made a decision before doing anything and, when no one has made a decision, just drag your heels and wait, what will the consequence be? Every part of the work gets mired down, and nothing gets completed. You should learn to seek the truth, or at least be able to act by your conscience and reason. So long as the appropriate way to do something is clear to you, and a majority of the others think that way is workable, then that is how you should practice. Do not be afraid of taking on responsibility for the thing, or of offending others, or of incurring consequences. If someone does not do anything real, and is always calculating, and afraid of taking responsibility, and does not dare to uphold principles in the things they do, this shows that they are particularly cunning and crafty, and have too many fiendish schemes. How iniquitous it is to wish to enjoy God's grace and blessings and yet do nothing real. There is no one God despises more than such crafty and conniving people. Regardless of what you are thinking, you are not**

practicing the truth, you have no loyalty, and your own personal considerations are always involved, and you always have your own thoughts and ideas. God watches these things, God knows—did you think God does not know? It is foolish to think this! And if you do not immediately repent, you will lose God’s work. Why will you lose it? Because God surveys people’s innermost being. He sees, with absolute clarity, all the schemes and trickery they have, and He knows that their heart is walled off from Him, that they are not of one heart with Him. What are the main things that keep their heart from God? Their thoughts, their interests, their pride, their status, and their own little schemes. When there are things in people’s hearts that separate them from God, and they are constantly preoccupied with these things, always scheming, this is trouble” (God’s Fellowship). I learned from God’s word that when doing one’s duty in the church everything should be based on the truth principles. In matters we can’t see clearly, we can discuss, reach a consensus, and do whatever most benefits church work. In matters we see clearly, we need to practice the truth and act according to principles. Only by doing so are we considerate of God’s will. But if we lack honest hearts, play tricks before God, always try to protect our personal interests, understand the truth but don’t practice it, and show no loyalty or consideration to God, then we will never receive the work of the Holy Spirit and never receive God’s enlightenment and guidance in our duties. I had clearly already determined Lin Xin as someone who didn’t pursue the truth, didn’t do practical work at all, and was a false leader who needed to be replaced immediately, but when I saw that the deacons wouldn’t agree, I was afraid they would say I was arrogant and self-righteous, so I didn’t dare uphold the truth principles and didn’t want to make the effort to fellowship with them about the truth regarding discerning false leaders. When I wrote a

letter to report to my leader, outwardly I was serious about my duties, but actually I was hesitant to step forward, because I was afraid my brothers and sisters would view me negatively. In my duty, I had no consideration for God's will, I didn't protect the work of the church, and only considered my own reputation and status. To protect my reputation and status I had even tolerated a false leader disrupting church work and hindering my brothers' and sisters' life entry. I saw that I really was selfish and cunning. God inspects people's hearts and minds, and my thoughts may deceive other people, but not God. During that time, my spirit was dark and I couldn't feel God's presence. This was actually God's chastisement and discipline!

Just at that moment, I heard about a church where an antichrist doing evil was discovered but no one reported or exposed him. Even when this antichrist was expelled, the members covered up and shielded him. This enraged God's disposition, and everyone in the church was put in isolation to reflect. When I heard about that result, my heart trembled with fear. I asked myself over and over again why I couldn't dismiss the false leader as soon as I discovered it. I read God's words: **"Once the truth has become life in you, when you observe someone who is blasphemous toward God, unfearful of God, and careless and perfunctory while performing their duty, or who interrupts and interferes with church work, you will respond according to the truth principles, and will be able to identify and expose them as necessary. If the truth has not become your life, and you still live within your satanic disposition, then when you discover wicked people and devils who cause disruptions and disturbances to the work of the church, you will turn a blind eye and a deaf ear; you will brush them aside, without reproach from your conscience. You will even think that anyone causing disruptions and**

disturbances to the work of the church has nothing to do with you. No matter how much the work of the church and the interests of the house of God suffer, you don't care, intervene, or feel guilty—which makes you someone who has no conscience or sense, a nonbeliever, a service-doer. You eat what is of God's, drink what is of God's, and enjoy all that comes from God, yet feel that any harm to the interests of the house of God is not related to you—which makes you a traitor who bites the hand that feeds you. If you do not protect the interests of the house of God, are you even human? This is a demon that has insinuated itself into the church. You feign belief in God, pretend to be a chosen one, and you want to freeload in God's house. You are not living the life of a human being, are more like a fiend than a person, and are clearly one of the nonbelievers” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words pierced my heart, and I was terrified. It was as if God was enraged with me. I clearly saw a false leader in the church disrupting work, hindering the life entry of my brothers and sisters, but to protect my relationship with the deacons and the brothers and sisters, and in fear of offending them, I didn't dare expose or handle the false leader and didn't fellowship on the truth to help the brothers and sisters discern. I had unwittingly become a shield for the false leader. I had become Satan's accomplice. What I was doing was evil! God came incarnate and expressed so much truth to water and supply us, and I was enjoying all that comes from God, but when a false leader appeared in the church, for the sake of protecting my own interests I tolerated her disturbing church work. I was truly biting the hand that feeds. I lacked all conscience, reason, and didn't have a shred of humanity. I had caused God so much grief. After that, I recalled another passage of God's word: **“All of you say you are considerate of God's burden and will defend the testimony of the**

church, but who among you has really been considerate of God's burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for His burden? Can you practice righteousness for Him? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan's deeds? Would you be able to set your emotions aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you allow My intentions to be fulfilled in you? Have you offered up your heart in the most crucial of moments? Are you someone who does My will? Ask yourself these questions, and think about them often" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). From these lines of God's word, I understood His will. A false leader appeared in this church, and God hoped I would stand on His side, be considerate of His will, and protect the interests of the church. Since I had discovered a false leader, I should quickly dismiss her, use principles to select the right person, and give my brothers and sisters a good church life. If I always considered my own interests and couldn't stand up to protect church work, I would certainly be detested and rejected by God. Realizing this, I decided to replace Lin Xin immediately. I no longer worried about being called arrogant and self-righteous. Because I knew clearly that doing so was upholding principles, practicing the truth, and protecting church work, it was not arrogance and self-righteousness. Only those who act without a basis in the truth of God's words, do whatever they please, and cling to their own notions and ideas are arrogant, self-righteous, and going against the truth.

So, after that, I used God's word to fellowship with them on what practical work that leaders and workers should do, on the consequences of not dismissing false leaders, on what good humanity is, what good caliber is, and what a loving heart is. Through my fellowship, my brothers and

sisters developed discernment of Lin Xin. They also saw that there are principles for transfers and dismissals in God's house. It is not about looking at a person's superficial love, gifts or caliber, but at whether they can pursue the truth, practice the truth, and do practical work. Everyone saw clearly that Lin Xin was a false leader and had to be dismissed. After she was dismissed, I fellowshipped with the brothers and sisters regarding the principles of elections and we selected a new church leader.

After the election finished, I thought of how the brothers and sisters reported some of Xiao Lei's behaviors. They said he never pursued the truth, that he believed in God for years without changing his views on things, that he lusted for worldly things and pursued money, and that he was only concerned with getting rich and living an extraordinary life. Each time he was given a duty, he was busy doing business to earn money and was unwilling to perform it. He roped the brothers and sisters of the church into making investments, as a consequence of which they all lost money. His behavior was already causing disturbances and disruption in church life. I thought about going to fellowship with him to warn him. But on the day of the gathering, he deliberately didn't come home until the evening, when the gathering had finished. I asked him what he thought about the recent events, and if he'd reflected and tried to understand himself. He had no understanding and felt no regret at all for his actions, and he had many misunderstandings and complaints. He said he had believed in God for years and gained nothing. His son disobeyed him, his wife misunderstood him. ... Everything he said was from the viewpoint of a nonbeliever. As I fellowshipped with him, I guided him to reflect and come to know himself, but he was very resistant. He also said, "What's the use of practicing the truth?" The brothers and sisters had reminded him and helped him before, and his reactions had been the same. Xiao Lei had never pursued the truth,

and had many manifestations of a nonbeliever. According to principles, someone who doesn't accept the truth, doesn't perform their duties, and disrupts church life needs to be isolated so they can reflect on themselves. They can't be allowed to disrupt church life. Then, if they do not repent, they must be cleared out of the church. Xiao Lei should have been isolated and given time to reflect, to prevent him from deceiving and disturbing the brothers and sisters of lesser stature who lacked discernment. So, I fellowshiped and offered discernment with the church leaders and deacons. Everyone agreed that Xiao Lei should be isolated. But several days later, a sister sent me a letter saying that Xiao Lei wanted to repent and change and practice the truth, but was living with corrupt dispositions and couldn't practice it. The sister didn't know if isolating him was suitable. Having read the letter, I was hesitant. If Xiao Lei wanted to repent and change, would me arranging for him to be isolated make him even more negative? If Xiao Lei and the brothers and sisters learned it was my suggestion to do this, would they say I wasn't giving people the chance to repent? I had only recently arrived at this church but I was dismissing false leaders and handling nonbelievers. Would the brothers and sisters say I was acting tough as soon as I started my new position and being too merciless? Xiao Lei was eloquent—when I went to expose him, if he didn't agree, opposed me, or lost his temper with me, what would I do? When I thought of these things, I found myself in difficulty again and didn't know what to do, so I went before God and prayed to ask Him to guide me in understanding His will so I could act by the truth principles.

After that, I read a passage of God's word: **"The church is under construction, and Satan is trying its utmost to demolish it. It wants to demolish My construction by any means possible; for this reason, the church must be purified quickly. Not the slightest dregs of evil must**

remain; the church must be purified such that it becomes flawless and continues to be as pure as in the past. You must be awake and waiting at all times, and you must pray before Me more. You must recognize the various plots and cunning schemes of Satan, recognize the spirits, know people, and be able to discern all kinds of people, events, and things; you must also eat and drink more of My words and, more importantly, you must be able to eat and drink of them by yourselves. Equip yourselves with all of the truth, and come before Me so that I may open your spiritual eyes and allow you to see all the mysteries that lie within the spirit.... When the church enters its construction phase, the saints march to battle. Satan's various hideous features are set before you: Do you stop and edge backward, or do you stand up and, relying upon Me, continue to move forward? Thoroughly expose Satan's corrupt and ugly features, spare no feelings, and show no mercy! Fight Satan to the death! I am your backup, and you must have the spirit of the male child! Satan is lashing out in its final death throes, but it will still be unable to escape My judgment. Satan is beneath My feet and it is also being trodden under your own feet—this is a fact!"

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 17). I learned from God's word that as God works to save people, Satan also does its best to disrupt and disturb God's work. God permits false leaders, antichrists, evildoers, and nonbelievers to appear in the church so that we can develop discernment, and discern the people, matters, and things around us according to the truth principles, understand which things come from God and which from Satan, stand on the side of truth, and discern and reject all of Satan's negative things. Xiao Lei never pursued the truth, had believed in God for years yet still held unbeliever views, and when his brothers and sisters fellowshiped with him, he always had fallacies ready to

refute them. He did not accept the truth whatsoever. Most importantly, during gatherings he always talked about things unrelated to the truth, and roped the brothers and sisters into making money and enriching themselves, disturbing the life of the church, and never playing a positive role. If this kind of person wasn't handled promptly, the brothers and sisters couldn't have a regular church life and those of lesser stature would be deceived. God's house requires nonbelievers to be handled, because nonbelievers and those who sincerely believe and love the truth are entirely different types of people. Isolating nonbelievers is to limit their evil deeds and ensure they can't disturb church life for the brothers and sisters, allowing God's chosen ones to better pursue the truth and be saved. I had to handle nonbelievers according to principles. If I shrank back, if I didn't handle them promptly so as to protect my interests and not offend others, wasn't I covering up for Satan, and tolerating nonbelievers disturbing the life of the church? I read another passage of God's word and learned about the root of why I couldn't practice the truth or uphold principles. Almighty God says: **"Most people wish to pursue and practice the truth, but much of the time they merely have a resolution and the desire to do so; the truth has not become their life. As a result, when they come across evil forces or encounter wicked and bad people committing evil deeds, or false leaders and antichrists doing things in a way that violates principles—thus disturbing the work of the church and harming God's chosen ones—they lose the courage to stand up and speak out. What does it mean when you have no courage? Does it mean that you are timid or inarticulate? Or is it that you do not understand thoroughly, and therefore do not have the confidence to speak up? Neither; this is primarily the consequence of being restrained by corrupt dispositions. One of the corrupt dispositions you reveal is a crafty disposition; when something happens**

to you, the first thing you think of is your own interests, the first thing you consider is the consequences, whether this will be beneficial to you. This is a crafty disposition, is it not? Another is a selfish and mean disposition. You think, ‘What does a loss to the interests of God’s house have to do with me? I’m not a leader, so why should I care? It’s got nothing to do with me. It’s not my responsibility.’ Such thoughts and words are not something that you consciously think, but are produced by your subconscious—which is the corrupt disposition revealed when people encounter an issue. Corrupt dispositions such as this govern the way you think, they bind your hands and feet, and control what you say. In your heart, you want to stand up and speak, but you have misgivings.... You have no power over what you say and do. Even if you wanted to, you could not tell the truth or say what you really think; even if you wanted to, you could not practice the truth; even if you wanted to, you could not fulfill your responsibilities. Everything you say, do, and practice is a lie, and you’re just sloppy and perfunctory. You are wholly shackled and controlled by your satanic disposition. You may want to accept and practice the truth, but it’s not up to you. When your satanic dispositions control you, you say and do whatever your satanic disposition tells you to do. **You are nothing but a puppet of corrupt flesh, you have become a tool of Satan**” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). What God revealed was precisely my own state. Each time I needed to practice the truth and protect the work of the church, I was only concerned with my own reputation and status. I was very selfish and cunning. Satanic philosophies like “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost” and “Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes” had already taken root deep in my mind. I lived by these satanic poisons, so I didn’t dare uphold

the truth principles. In the matter of dismissing Lin Xin, I had been afraid my brothers and sisters would say I was arrogant and self-righteous, and that they wouldn't have a good impression of me, so I didn't dare uphold principles. When handling the problem of Xiao Lei, I clearly knew that according to principle he should have been isolated, but I feared that the brothers and sisters would say I wasn't giving him a chance to repent and that I wasn't considerate of his weaknesses. I had preferred the life of the church to be impacted than uphold the truth principles. All that mattered to me was how to protect my own image and status, and I didn't care how the church's work or its interests were harmed. How could I call myself a sincere believer in God? Only then did I realize that I was poisoned deeply by satanic philosophies, that I was selfish and deceitful. God likes people who have a sense of justice and who can uphold the truth principles, who can uphold and protect all positive things, and who dare to stand up and expose and reject all negative things. I should be someone with a sense of justice, upholding the truth principles no matter what others might think of me. After that, through fellowship, the brothers and sisters learned to discern Xiao Lei's nonbeliever behavior, and 80% of them agreed to isolate him so that he could reflect on himself. Next, I went to fellowship with Xiao Lei and used his consistent behavior to expose his problems. But even before I could finish, he was unyielding and discontent, saying that the brothers and sisters invested willingly, that it had nothing to do with him. ... His behavior proved that he could not accept the truth whatsoever, and that he belonged to the nonbelievers. If he still showed no reflection or repentance during isolation, he would be cleared out of the church. After practicing according to the truth principles, I felt an indescribable sense of security, peace and joy in my heart.

After that experience, I started to understand my corrupt dispositions, I could let go of my interests and practice the truth, and I could live out a little human likeness. All of this was God's salvation. I also see that God's house is different from the world. The truth rules in God's house. When we practice the truth and act with principle, we gain God's blessing and guidance.

85. What Was All That Suffering For?

By Angela, Italy

After becoming a believer, I saw that plenty of leaders and workers could really endure lots of hardship. They'd keep working, doing their duty through wind or rain, and the brothers and sisters all approved of them and admired them. I really envied them and hoped I could become like them: a person who could suffer and pay a price, and gain others' admiration. So, I was really enthusiastic in my pursuit and I was later elected as a church leader. I was really busy in my duty every day, and the others praised me for being able to handle hardship, and they said I was someone who pursued the truth. I was thrilled every time I heard something like that, and felt like all the suffering was worth it. Later, the scope of my responsibilities grew and grew, and my workload kept increasing. I saw some of the sisters I was partnered with could really suffer and pay a price. They always went to bed really late and in the day they sometimes went to gatherings on an empty stomach, without the time to eat. I heard the brothers and sisters say that they were bearing a burden in their duty and that they were able to take hardship. I felt that if the brothers and sisters liked people like that, then God must too. So I started doing my duty late into the night. But after a while my body couldn't really take it anymore and I'd start getting sleepy once it got past midnight. But each time I'd see the other sisters there still working, I felt embarrassed to go to bed, afraid they'd say I was heeding the flesh and that I didn't have a burden in my duty. So I'd hang in there, but I couldn't help with the sleepiness, and I wasn't getting much done. In spite of that, I still didn't go to bed. I silently urged myself on, thinking I couldn't heed my flesh and that I couldn't be looked down on by the others. Sometimes, because I'd stayed up late, when I had to get up early for a

gathering, I'd be sleepy riding my e-bike there, and also sleepy in the gathering. I wanted to take an afternoon nap, but I was afraid the others would say I was craving physical comforts. Every day, I forced myself to hold out, and I pushed myself through it. One day, riding my e-bike to a gathering, because I was so sleepy, I was in a daze the whole way and I ended up crashing into a ditch, which scared me awake right away. Walking my e-bike along the road, I kept thinking about how this wasn't a correct way of being. From my introspection, I realized that ever since I had been elected as a leader, all I had thought about every day was visibly suffering and laboring, always fearing that people would say I was focused on the flesh and craved comfort. That meant I lacked routine in my life, and I wasn't even resting in a normal way.

One day I read some of God's words exposing the Pharisees, and I applied these words to myself. God's words say: **"Do you know what a Pharisee actually is? Are there any Pharisees around you? Why are these people called 'Pharisees'? How are Pharisees described? They are people who are hypocritical, completely fake, and put on an act in everything they do. What act do they put on? They pretend to be good, kind, and positive. Is this what they are actually like? Absolutely not. Given that they are hypocrites, everything that is manifested and revealed in them is false; it is all pretense—it is not their true face. Where is their true face hidden? It is hidden deep within their hearts, never to be seen by others. Everything on the outside is an act, it is all fake, but they can only fool people; they cannot fool God. If people do not pursue the truth, if they do not practice and experience God's words, then they cannot truly understand the truth, and so no matter how nice-sounding their words are, these words are not the truth reality, but words and doctrines. Some people only focus on parroting**

words and doctrines, they ape whoever preaches the highest sermons, with the result that in just a few years their recital of words and doctrines grows ever more advanced, and they are admired and venerated by many people, after which they start to camouflage themselves, and pay great attention to what they say and do, showing themselves to be especially pious and spiritual. They use these so-called spiritual theories to camouflage themselves. This is all they talk about wherever they go, specious things that fit with people's notions, but which lack any of the truth reality. And through preaching these things—things that are in line with people's notions and tastes—they dupe many people. To others, such people seem very devout and humble, but it is actually fake; they seem tolerant, forbearing, and loving, but it is actually a pretense; they say they love God, but it is actually an act. Others think such people holy, but it is actually fake. Where can a person who is truly holy be found? Human holiness is all fake. It is all an act, a pretense. On the outside, they appear loyal to God, but they are actually just performing for others to see. When no one is looking, they are not the slightest bit loyal, and everything they do is perfunctory. Superficially, they expend themselves for God and have given up their families and careers. But what are they doing in secret? They are conducting their own enterprise and running their own operation in the church, profiting from the church and stealing offerings secretly under the guise of working for God.... These people are the modern hypocritical Pharisees” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). What God's words revealed was really heartrending and difficult for me. I was acting exactly like the Pharisees did. They loved to use their superficial behavior to put on an act, intentionally praying on street corners and often preaching God's words so

people would think they were really devout and that they really loved God. But in private they didn't practice God's words at all. All those things they did were just for show, to gain approval and admiration. I was the same. I was particularly focused on superficial good behavior so the brothers and sisters would think well of me. Seeing some others able to suffer and pay a price in their duty and gaining everyone's approval and admiration, I strove to be that kind of person. When I was chosen to be a leader, I saw the sisters I was partnered with work late into the night, and I forced myself to stay up late so I wouldn't fall behind them. I'd trudge on no matter how sleepy I was. I even did away with taking a normal midday nap in my effort to present myself as someone who could take hardship. I was disguising myself at every turn, trying to gain the brothers' and sisters' admiration by visibly doing good things. Suffering and expending myself that way was completely fake and deceptive. I was taking the Pharisees' path—and how could this not disgust God? After that, whenever I wanted to disguise myself, I consciously forsook myself, not putting on a show in front of others, and I also adjusted my work and rest times, and I'd go to bed when I was done with that day's work. I felt a lot more relaxed when I practiced in this way.

I went abroad a year later. The brothers and sisters I worked with could really take hardship in their duties and they worked late every night. Sometimes, I wanted to go to bed early when I finished my work, but I was afraid they'd think I was heeding my flesh. Also, I was a leader, so what would everyone think of me if I went to bed earlier than other brothers and sisters? Would they say I couldn't handle suffering and didn't have a burden for my duty? When I thought in that way, I couldn't help but start putting on an act again and stay up late along with them. But I'd start getting sleepy and begin to nod off after 1 a.m. They encouraged me to go to bed earlier,

but I'd force myself to perk up and say, "I'm fine, I can handle it. I'll go to sleep in a bit." But then I couldn't help but end up in a daze again. Sometimes I really couldn't handle my sleepiness, so I'd put my head on the desk and nap for a bit, but I didn't feel at peace doing this. I was concerned about what the others would say about me, so I'd rush to busy myself with work again. To make it look like I carried a burden, sometimes I'd intentionally send out a group message when it was really late so others would know how late I'd stayed up, that I was doing my duty into the night. I wanted to buy some nutritional supplements because of some health problems, but I worried about what everyone else would say. Would they think I treasured my flesh? So, I didn't buy them. In a gathering one time, I found out that a sister wasn't in a good state, and that she needed some fellowship and support. But since she was in another country in a different time zone and it was already the middle of the night for me, I originally figured I'd fellowship with her the next day. But then I thought that fellowshiping with her at night might make me look like I carried a burden for brothers' and sisters' life entry. So I contacted her and didn't finish fellowship until around 2 a.m. She told me, "It's so late where you are, you should go to bed. It's bad for your health to always burn the midnight oil like this." I was really satisfied to hear that. Though I was physically uncomfortable, it wasn't in vain since it made her think I had a burden and a sense of responsibility. I started to have all sorts of little health issues after that, and the doctor told me it was related to long-term sleep deprivation. I ignored that and kept doing the same thing. Around this time, an upper leader was always reminding me that I shouldn't stay up too late, that work won't be held up if I'm early to bed, early to rise. I thought to myself that if I went to bed early, the others would think that I, as a leader, can't withstand as much hardship as others, in which case, would they still look up to me? I

didn't take the leader's words to heart. A sister saw I was unwell and said, "You must have too much on your mind. Having so many issues to resolve all the time and all that stress is impacting your health. As leaders, you have so many concerns." I felt really pleased with myself when she said that. I felt the price I paid, the suffering I endured was worth it for others' approval. This was until I read a passage of God's words that gave me some understanding of the wrong path I was on. God's words say: **"Antichrists are sick of the truth, they do not accept the truth at all—which manifestly indicates one fact: Antichrists never act according to the truth principles, they never practice the truth—which is the most blatant manifestation of an antichrist. Apart from status and prestige, and being blessed and rewarded, the only thing they pursue is the enjoyment of the comforts of the flesh and of the trappings of status; and with this being the case, they naturally cause disruptions and disturbances. These facts show that what they pursue, their behavior, and what is manifested in them are not beloved by God. And these are absolutely not the ways of acting and behaviors of people who pursue the truth. For example, some antichrists who are like Paul have the resolve to suffer when they perform their duty, they can stay up all night and go without food when doing their work, they can subdue their own bodies, can overcome sickness and discomfort. And what is their aim in doing all this? It is to show everyone that they are capable of putting themselves aside—of self-abnegation—when it comes to God's commission; that for them, there is only duty. They exhibit all this in front of other people, they put it on full display, not resting when they should, even deliberately extending their working hours, getting up early and going to bed late. But what about work efficiency and the effectiveness of their duty when the antichrists toil like this from**

morning until night? These things are beyond the scope of their considerations. They only try to do all this in front of others, so that other people can see them suffering, and see how they expend for God without any thought to themselves. As for whether the duty they perform and the work they are doing is carried out according to the truth principles, they don't think about this at all. All they think about is whether their outwardly good behavior has been seen by everyone, whether everyone is aware of it, whether they have left an impression on everyone, and whether this impression will provoke admiration and approval in them, whether these people will give them the thumbs up when they're gone and praise them by saying, 'They really can endure hardship, their spirit of endurance and extraordinary perseverance are beyond any of us. This is someone who pursues the truth, who is able to suffer and endure a heavy burden, they are a pillar in the church.' Hearing this, the antichrists are satisfied. In their hearts they think, 'I was so clever to pretend like that, I was so smart to do this! I knew everyone would only look at the outside, and they like these good behaviors. I knew that if I acted like this, it would earn people's approval, it would make them give me the thumbs up, it would make them admire me in the depths of their hearts, make them look favorably upon me, and that no one would look down on me ever again. And if a day comes when the Above discovers that I haven't been doing real work and replaces me, there will undoubtedly be many people who stick up for me, who cry for me, and urge me to stay, and speak on my behalf.' They are secretly proud of their fake behavior—and does this pride not also reveal the nature essence of an antichrist? And what essence is this? (Wickedness.) That's right—this is the essence of wickedness” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Ten)). God exposes

an antichrist's nature as terribly evil. They'll resort to any tactics to put up a false front to achieve their aim of controlling others and being admired. For example, they intentionally extend their working hours, staying up late and getting up early so it looks like they are devoted to God. They toil in their duties from dawn to dusk, they skip food and sleep, and they neglect physical needs, so that people admire and adore them. Eventually they end up bringing people before themselves. God hates and condemns this behavior. I felt terrible, really uncomfortable when I held myself up to God's words. I was acting just like an antichrist. To make others see I could take hardship, didn't heed my flesh and had a burden for my work, and to make them admire me for being a good leader, I took great pains to put on a show in my times for work, rest, as well as the things I ate. I didn't rest when I should have, and I intentionally stayed up late even when it wasn't necessary for my duty. I kept on at this even when I developed some health issues. I was so afraid others would say I cared for the flesh too much and have a poor impression of me that I didn't buy nutritional supplements I needed. I was slyly establishing myself by ostensibly acting nice, suffering and paying a price, making others think I pursued the truth, that I was diligent and devoted to my duty, and that I was a good leader, making them respect me. My efforts and expenditures were completely tainted with fakeness and deception. It was all to make myself look good and mislead others with a false image. I was on an antichrist's path. I didn't want to keep doing things this way, so I prayed, ready to repent to God and change my incorrect state.

Later, I was reflecting on why I was so focused on appearing to endure hardship. I realized that I was harboring a mistaken perspective. I had always thought that being able to suffer and pay a price, and ostensibly doing good things, were practicing the truth and satisfying God, that God

would approve of this. But I saw through the exposure of God's words that this kind of perspective doesn't hold water at all. God's words say: **"What do the superficial good deeds of humans represent? They represent the flesh, and even the best of outward practices do not represent life; they can only show your own individual temperament. The outward practices of humanity cannot fulfill the desire of God. ... If your actions always exist in appearance alone, then this means that you are vain in the extreme. What manner of humans are those who only carry out superficial good deeds and are devoid of reality? Such people are just hypocritical Pharisees and religious figures! If you do not shed your outward practices and are unable to make changes, then the elements of hypocrisy in you will grow even more. The greater your elements of hypocrisy, the more resistance there is toward God. In the end, such people will surely be cast out!"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. In Faith, One Must Focus on Reality—Engaging in Religious Ritual Is Not Faith). **"Now, there are some people who work from dawn until dusk and forget to eat or sleep when they perform their duty, they are able to subdue the flesh, to ignore physical hardship, even to work when they are sick. Though they have these redeeming qualities and are good and right people, there are still things in their hearts that they are not able to put aside: prestige, profit, status, and vanity. If they never put these things aside, are they people who pursue the truth? The answer is self-evident. The hardest part of believing in God is achieving a change in disposition. Perhaps you can remain unmarried your whole life, or never eat rich food or wear nice clothes; some people even say, 'It doesn't matter if I suffer all my life, or if I'm lonely all my life, I can endure it—with God by my side, these things mean nothing.' It is easy to overcome and resolve this kind of physical pain and hardship. What is not easy to**

overcome? Man's corrupt dispositions. Corrupt dispositions cannot be resolved through mere self-restraint. People can endure physical suffering in order to perform their duties properly, to satisfy the will of God, and to enter the kingdom in the future—but does being able to suffer and pay a price mean that their dispositions have changed? It does not. To measure if there has been a change in someone's disposition, do not look at how much suffering they can endure or how much good behavior they engage in on the surface. The only way of accurately measuring if a person's disposition has changed is to look at the aims, motives, and intents behind their actions, the principles by which they conduct themselves and handle affairs, and their attitude toward the truth” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Good Behavior Does Not Mean One's Disposition Has Changed). I saw from God's words that being able to suffer and pay a price does not equate to God's approval. In the Age of Grace, Paul was ostensibly able to withstand hardship. He spread the gospel, and didn't betray the Lord when he was put in prison. His behavior seemed admirable. But all his suffering and expenditure was to make transactions with God. He wanted to exchange his suffering for a crown and the blessing of God's kingdom. His good deeds didn't mean he had already achieved dispositional change. Instead, because of these ostensible good deeds, he was always showing off and bearing witness to himself, and he became more and more arrogant. He even testified that for him to live was Christ, and he ended up being condemned and punished by God. Reflecting on myself, I only thought about appearing to behave well to disguise myself and make people look up to me, but I wasn't focusing on practicing the truth or resolving my corrupt dispositions. As a result, I became more hypocritical and didn't change my life disposition at all. If I continued in that pursuit, I definitely wouldn't gain any truth at all. I only

could end up cast out like Paul. Thinking on this, I wanted to change my incorrect perspective on pursuit right away.

Later, I read this passage of God's words: **“God gave man their body, and within certain bounds, its faculties will remain healthy; go beyond these bounds or violate certain laws, however, and things will happen—people will fall ill. Do not contravene the laws that God has set for man. If you do, this means you do not respect God, and that you are foolish and ignorant. If you contravene these laws—if you go ‘off-piste’—God will not protect you, God will take no responsibility for you; God despises such behavior. ... When performing your duty, it is best to find a normal balance between work and rest. When your duty gets busy, your flesh should endure a little suffering, you should put aside your physical needs, but this must not go on for too long; if it does, it will be easy for you to become exhausted, and could impact your effectiveness at performing your duty. At times like this you must rest. What is the aim of resting? It is to look after your body so that you can perform your duty better. But if you are not physically tired but always look for a chance to slack off regardless of whether your duty is busy or not, you have no devotion. As well as being devoted, and performing the duty entrusted to you by God properly, you must also not tire your body out. You must grasp this principle. When your duty is not busy, take scheduled rests. When you get up in the morning, practice spiritual devotions, pray, read God's words, and fellowship the truth of God's words together or learn hymns, as normal; when it gets busy, focus on performing your duty, practice and experience God's words, and incorporate God's words into your actual life; this will make it easy to perform your duty according to the truth principles. Only thus will you be truly experiencing the work of God. These are the kinds of**

adjustments you should make” (God’s Fellowship). Reading God’s words was so illuminating for me. God has us live in accordance with the rules that He has preordained, to live and rest properly, and to do our duty on this foundation. When our work requires some suffering and for us to pay a price, we need to forsake the flesh, do our best to get it done. When our work doesn’t call for us to stay up late, we should work and sleep properly and maintain a good mental state. In this way, we can be effective in our duty. I thought of this from the Bible: **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment”** (Matthew 22:37–38). God hopes that we can heed His will in our duty, truly have a burden, and do our duty wholeheartedly. This gains God’s approval. Considering the path God has pointed out to us, I saw how truly foolish I was. God’s words are so clear, but I never put them into practice. I’d always been acting based on my notions and imaginings, and undergoing so much meaningless suffering. I realized that I couldn’t keep focusing on ostensibly doing good deeds, and that I should accept God’s scrutiny, do everything before God without considering what people think, and diligently perform my duty. This is what I have to do.

After that, in gatherings I dissected how I’d gone astray and my mistaken perspective so the brothers and sisters could gain discernment. I’d normally focus on practicing God’s words, and put my heart into how I can bear a burden in my work and how I can perform my duty in accordance with principles, and I was no longer always focused on ostensibly suffering to gain the admiration of others. Over time, I stopped worrying about how other people saw me, and I didn’t think about putting on a show in front of others. I felt a great sense of release. Through experience I’ve learned that only God’s words are the direction and standard for conduct and action, and

that practicing by God's words is such a relief and so liberating. There's no need to always pretend. Living in this way is not so tiring or painful. Thank God!

86. What Should We Pursue in Life?

By Song Zihan, China

My health wasn't great as a child and much of our family's money generally went to my healthcare, so my dad didn't really like me, and he hit me and yelled at me a lot. I was mocked and excluded by others because of that. I'd often go hide and cry alone, feeling miserable and wronged. I felt like, "You guys look down on me. When I grow up, I'm determined to have a great career to show all of you up." My husband and I didn't get along after getting married, so we divorced. I gave my 4-year-old son to my mom to look after and went to help out at a beauty salon a classmate of mine opened. She was a business school teacher, so since she had a job, she had me help her manage things in the shop. Before long, she totally changed, becoming aloof and condescending, ordering me around from her position as the boss. I felt really uncomfortable, and a gap formed between us. One day we got into an argument over something and I wanted to quit. She mocked me, saying, "Song Zihan, I'm not selling you short. If you can make it without me, I'll eat my hat!" I was really upset when I heard that. It was a real blow to my self-esteem. I thought, "You're too disrespectful. You shouldn't judge a book by its cover. Because of what you just said, I'll make a career for myself to show you up, even if it kills me. I'll make you eat your humiliating words from today. One day, I'm going to watch you eat your hat." I packed my bags and left in a huff that very day.

I started working and saving up money, and never asked for time off even when I got sick. When I was tired and my back ached, I gritted my teeth and kept on. After four months, I started managing a hair salon myself. I ran it alone to save money, just eating one meal a day. My stomach growled at night, and I'd drink water to quell my hunger.

Sometimes business was good and I'd work until 2 or 3 a.m. before going to bed. I'd drag myself out of bed at 6 a.m., with eyes still half-closed. My hands were cracked and burned by the perming chemicals. My fingers bled as soon as I bent them—it was really painful. I hid in my bedcovers a lot, crying, but as soon as I thought of my father's disdain and my classmate's mockery, I'd quietly motivate myself, thinking "You have to endure great suffering in order to come out on top," and "People must have the spine to fight for their dignity." I felt like one day I'd make it, and everyone who'd looked down on me and wounded my pride would see me with new eyes. I was filled with the motivation to work hard. In 1996, I finally opened up my own salon. It was bigger than my classmate's shop and decorated more attractively. On opening day, I was moved to tears. I thought, "I've finally opened a shop and now I'm the boss—I can hold my head high. Later, I want to expand the shop and make it even fancier and more appealing so my classmate will be utterly disgraced. If my friends and family from home knew I'd opened my own shop, they'd be impressed." After three years of hard work, I had put aside a bit of money. To gain more people's respect, I invested further to open a much larger beauty salon and a cosmetics company, and opened up nine chain stores in different regions. I also joined several national beauty competitions and won some gold medals. After years of hard work, I finally became well-respected in the industry, and I was filled with an indescribable sense of joy. I wanted to stand on a mountaintop and shout: "My dream has come true! I'm not that same person everyone used to mock!" Driving my car home, everyone looked at me with envy. I had a real sense of satisfaction and pride. It seemed I'd taken the right path, and I should work even harder in the future to further expand my business.

In 2002, I opened a large beauty salon in another large city. As my business grew, more and more people got to know my name. I felt like I could walk with my chin up, I felt more alive and walked with a spring in my step. I thought, "If I run into my classmate, I definitely have to 'thank' her. Without her shaming comments, I wouldn't have what I have today." But to my surprise, I learned that she had gotten lung cancer and passed away. I was shocked and really disappointed. I didn't understand how people's lives could be so delicate. She died at just 39 years old. I'd finally succeeded after paying such a big price, wanting her to retract her words that had so insulted me and trampled my dignity. But I was too late to show her my moment of success and glory, as she departed so suddenly. No matter how much fame or fortune you have, you can't take any of it with you when you die, so what's the point of life? That thought made me feel inexplicably disappointed and despondent. My classmate's death really impacted me. For a time, that question was constantly vexing me, but no one could tell me the answer.

I threw myself back into my work before long and thought about changing careers. Opening a beauty salon was still low in the social hierarchy, but being a doctor was a high prestige, well-respected job. So, thinking nothing of the expensive tuition, I went to several major cities, seeking out famous doctors and acupuncturists to learn Chinese medicine. Trying to realize my dream, I neglected my son's education, and even forgot entirely about his existence. I didn't look after my aging mother or even mind my own business affairs, instead totally throwing myself into my studies. Whether walking, eating, or lying in bed, all I did was go over dry Chinese medicine theories, with no time to have fun with my friends or talk with my parents or sisters. Sometimes it felt really difficult, and I wanted to give up on my studies, but at the thought of how learning medicine could

raise my social status and get me more admiration from people, I warned myself not to give up halfway and be looked down on by others. I had to complete my studies, no matter how hard and tiring it was. In order to move above others, I kept encouraging myself in this way. Through 15 years of diligent studying, research, and practice, I developed a bit of a reputation in the medical field, and started traveling around the country doing acupuncture and healthcare trainings. After a long time always being busy with trainings, going back and forth on planes and trains, I developed some digestive issues that also seriously affected my sleep, and I got dizzy and lightheaded all the time. I didn't go get it looked at by a doctor, though. Once when my stomach inflammation was acting up, I also developed an anal fistula and had seriously bloody stool. I had a training right then, so I just had to bear it and get on a plane to a city over 300 miles away. As soon as I stepped off the plane I was surrounded by flowers and applause, and I heard envious voices of approval behind me: "That's Professor Song, so young and beautiful." "Yeah, I've taken one of her classes—it was very well taught." In that moment, I felt like all my sacrifices and hard work had been worth it, and I silently told myself over and over, "Stay strong, you can do it. Lots of hard work is what lies behind success." I fought to tolerate the intense abdominal pain and cold sweat, standing on stage delivering speeches for three days with a smile on my face. I waved goodbye to the students when I got off the stage, and in that moment, I felt a strange kind of sadness at the emptiness of it all. I dragged my weak, exhausted body back to my hotel, collapsed onto my bed, and stared blankly at the ceiling. An inexplicable sense of loneliness and desolation came over me. Flowers and applause used to be symbols of my success and renown, but all that was short-lived, totally fleeting. It couldn't help free me from my sickness and emptiness at all. I was asking myself over and over: "Now that I've gained

others' respect and admiration, why am I not even the slightest bit happy? Instead, I feel empty, miserable, helpless, and lonely. What do people really live for? How can people live with meaning?"

Each time I dragged my weary body back home, my mom asked me over and over, sadly, "Honey, you're so busy from dawn till dusk. You're physically spent. Is it worth it? You should believe in God—we were created by Him. By having faith you will gain the truth, which is the only way to live a meaningful, peaceful life. Without faith, anything you pursue in this world will feel empty." I actually knew that faith was a good thing, but my heart was entirely in my work. I wanted to become a believer when I was older, when I retired. How could I not focus on my career at such a young age? That's why I didn't take my mother's words seriously.

Because I was chronically over-stressed, both in my work and emotionally, I developed an endocrine disorder and my immunity suffered. I got a strange skin condition that was incredibly itchy, an itch that came from deep under my skin. Scratching with my hands did nothing, nor did taking medication. I would grab the skin on my face with one hand, and hold a needle used for skin tests in the other hand, stabbing the skin over and over until my whole face was bloody. My skin was so unbearably itchy, and I felt like I'd be better off dead. My face was terribly swollen. Seeing my reflection, looking like neither human nor ghost, I knew I couldn't leave the house. I thought, "I can cure all sorts of hard-to-treat ailments for others, but not my own. How pathetic!" I had been so glorious, but now I was such a wreck. I wanted to jump out the window to my death. I kept crying and wailing, "Oh! I must have done such evil in a past life and this is my payback!" I went to a Chinese medicine doctor to get it treated after that. He said he'd seen one similar case before, and 20 years of treatment didn't cure it. Hearing that was devastating for me. Was I really going to

spend the rest of my life like that? I'd toiled most of my life to make a name for myself, but this was what I'd become. What was the point of my life? I wanted to just down some sleeping pills and be done with it. Just as I was preparing to end my life, in April 2018, my mom shared God's work of the last days with me once more.

I saw The Church of Almighty God's musical drama, "Xiaozhen's Story." I was incredibly moved. It had some of God's words in it: **"The Almighty has mercy on these people who have suffered deeply; at the same time, He is fed up with these people who lack consciousness, as He has had to wait too long for an answer from humanity. He wishes to seek, to seek your heart and your spirit, to bring you water and food and to awaken you, that you may no longer be thirsty and hungry. When you are weary and when you begin to feel something of the bleak desolation of this world, do not be lost, do not cry. Almighty God, the Watcher, will embrace your arrival at any time. He is keeping watch by your side, waiting for you to turn back around. He is waiting for the day you suddenly recover your memory: when you realize that you came from God, that, at some unknown time you lost your direction, at some unknown time you lost consciousness on the road, and at some unknown time acquired a 'father'; when you realize, furthermore, that the Almighty has always been keeping watch, waiting there a very, very long time for your return. He has been watching with desperate longing, waiting for a response without an answer. His watching and waiting are beyond any price, and they are for the sake of the human heart and the human spirit. Perhaps this watching and waiting are indefinite, and perhaps they are at an end. But you should know exactly where your heart and your spirit are right now"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Sighing of the Almighty). Every sentence of God's

words spoke to my heart. Xiaozhen's story was like a true portrayal of my own life. I could feel God calling to me with His arms wide open, "Child, come back!" God's love moved me to tears, and I just couldn't stop sobbing. In that moment I felt the warmth of coming back home. My wandering heart had found its harbor and was safe. Those years of loneliness, misery, and sadness, and even secrets I'd never told anyone, I could finally share with God. I cried out in my heart, "Only God knows how miserable my life has been. Only the Creator can have true love for human beings!" I came before God in tears and told Him, "God! When I was exhausted from toiling in my career, You shared the gospel with me repeatedly through my mother, but I was unwilling to come before You for the sake of my career. Seeing Xiaozhen calling out 'God,' 'God' over and over on stage was like one punch in the gut after another. I hate myself for repeatedly pushing away Your hand of salvation, hurting You time and again. But You didn't give up on my salvation. You stayed by my side, waiting for the moment I'd turn toward You, so You could save me from my sea of pain. Oh God, I want to believe in You. I want to follow You closely and worship You!" Then, I cried out to God everything I had buried in my heart all those years. I felt much lighter all over and my mood was improved. Being able to come before God made me the happiest person ever, and I really regretted how stubborn I'd been, pushing away God's salvation again and again.

After that, I devoured God's words hungrily. I was deeply touched to see the true picture God shows us of mankind being corrupted by Satan. God's words are all the truth and they reveal us humans as we truly are. Gathering with brothers and sisters and singing hymns in praise of God was really fulfilling for me. I was very happy. I saw that brothers and sisters were honest and sincere with each other. When they showed corruption,

they could openly fellowship and help each other without any sort of intrigue or cheating. I felt like I was living in an entirely different world and I totally forgot my previous misery. My health also gradually improved. I was so grateful for God's salvation. I was thinking that ever since I'd become a believer, reading God's words and singing hymns praising God every day, I'd been so happy. Why was it that when I was out in the world with a career, reputation, status, and money, I wasn't happy at all, but instead my life was incredibly miserable? I read something in God's words later on: **"Satan uses fame and gain to control man's thoughts, until all people can think of is fame and gain. They struggle for fame and gain, suffer hardships for fame and gain, endure humiliation for fame and gain, sacrifice everything they have for fame and gain, and they will make any judgment or decision for the sake of fame and gain. In this way, Satan binds people with invisible shackles, and they have neither the strength nor the courage to throw them off. They unknowingly bear these shackles and trudge ever onward with great difficulty. For the sake of this fame and gain, mankind shuns God and betrays Him and becomes increasingly wicked. In this way, therefore, one generation after another is destroyed in the midst of Satan's fame and gain"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). **"If you do not understand the truth, you will not be able to see this matter clearly and you will think, 'It is good to have a will to fight; it is proper. How can people live if they don't have a bit of a will to fight? If they don't have a bit of a will to fight, they will not have any spirit or strength to live. Then, what meaning is there to living? They submit to every unfavorable situation—how weak and cowardly is that!' People all think they must fight to demonstrate their worth. How do they fight to demonstrate their worth? By putting emphasis on the word 'fight.' No matter what**

situation they encounter, they try to achieve their goals via fighting. The mentality of never saying die has its origins in the word ‘fight.’ ... Every day they live, they fight. No matter what they do, they always try to achieve victory by fighting, and flaunt their victory. They try to fight to demonstrate their worth in everything they do—can they achieve it? What exactly are they competing for and fighting for? All their fighting is for fame, gain, and status; all their fighting is for their own self-interest. Why are they fighting? It is in order to look like a hero and be named an elite. However, their fighting must end in death, and they must be punished. There is no question about this. Wherever there is Satan and demons, there is fighting. They will ultimately be destroyed, and then the fighting will end, too. This will be the outcome of Satan and demons” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus One: What the Truth Is).

God’s words resolved the confusion in my heart, and I felt immediately enlightened. I realized that fame, fortune, and status are a means, a tactic Satan uses to corrupt, mislead, and control people. They’re also shackles Satan puts on us, and they’re shackles none of us can free ourselves from. Those 28 years I’d been working so hard, my life was miserable. I’d taken satanic poisons like “People must have the spine to fight for their dignity,” “People should strive to achieve dignity,” “You have to endure great suffering in order to come out on top,” “Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards” and “A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies” as positive things to pursue. I’d taken them as my goals in life. I was running wild on the path of chasing fame and fortune, living a miserable life. Thinking back to the start, when my classmate mocked and belittled me, I swore I’d fight to show her up. I made my way into circles of status and renown. I started to toil and suffer for fame and fortune. My hands were cracked and bleeding from perming

chemicals, but I didn't want to spend money to hire someone. To pinch pennies, I ate just one meal a day and quelled my hunger with water. I was tired to my limit, but still wouldn't rest. I took "You have to endure great suffering in order to come out on top" as my motivation in pursuing fame and fortune. Later I finally made a name for myself locally and was temporarily satisfied, but I still didn't rest in my pursuit of reputation and status. My ambition and desire just kept growing. To improve my social standing, increase my renown, and gain more people's admiration and esteem, I thought nothing of spending 15 years studying medicine, with no time to go home to see my mother and son. I thought of nothing more than my career and reputation. Once I achieved success, I disregarded everything to bask in the flowers and applause. I even pushed away God's hand of salvation time and again. To gain others' flattery and praise, I put on an act. I was physically spent and exhausted to the point of illness, but kept giving lectures. Then all that accumulated fatigue became a strange illness, and I wished for death. The path I walked with the shackles of fame and fortune was grueling. Like a donkey pulling a millstone in the dark, I couldn't break free no matter how hard I pulled. I was living by these satanic poisons, with nothing but fame and fortune in my heart and others' esteem in my mind. I became really selfish and vile, completely lacking intimacy and love. I was like a cold-blooded creature, living like neither man nor beast. I was the only one who knew the pain behind the reputation I'd gained. That wasn't a proper path for life. Because of that one thing my classmate said, I didn't want to be an average person, but wanted to lord over others, to be exalted. For over two decades, I suffered like I was roasting over an oven. Just as God's words say: **"If you always want to be someone outstanding, a cut above the rest, then you are throwing yourself to the wolves, putting yourself through the meat grinder, and making your own life difficult"**

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Twelve: They Want to Retreat When There Is No Status and No Hope of Gaining Blessings). If it weren't for the revelations of God's words, none of us would see that "People should strive to achieve dignity" and "You have to endure great suffering in order to come out on top" are fallacies, that they're tactics Satan uses to corrupt humans.

I read something else in God's words: **"When one does not have God, when one cannot see Him, when one cannot clearly recognize God's sovereignty, every day is meaningless, worthless, miserable. Wherever one is, whatever one's job is, one's means of living and the pursuit of one's goals bring one nothing but endless heartbreak and suffering without relief, such that one cannot bear to look back on one's past. Only when one accepts the Creator's sovereignty, submits to His orchestrations and arrangements, and seeks true human life will one gradually begin to break free from all heartbreak and suffering, and to be rid of all the emptiness of life"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). I realized from God's words, the reason the past 20-odd years were so painful for me was because I didn't know God. I had been living by satanic philosophies without a proper goal and direction in life. That's what put me on that wrong path. Satan was toying with me mercilessly and I was living without any meaning. I had to come before God, accept His words as the basis for my existence, submit to His rule and arrangements, and take the way of fearing God and shunning evil to find the right path in life. This was just like Job, who was the richest man in the East and had a family of great wealth, but knew that all we have is ordained by God's sovereignty. He didn't pursue or revel in fame or status, but just worked normally. He lived freely and happily. Then overnight, his family's riches were stripped away, all his children died, but he still praised God's name, saying "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah" (Job

1:21). He was a wonderful witness for God. Job was able to submit to God's rule and arrangements, and he took the path of fearing God and shunning evil. He lived with dignity and ultimately gained God's approval. I wanted to imitate Job, give up the wrong path I'd taken in life, have true faith, read God's words, pursue the truth, and do the duty of a created being. That was the only way to be free of the emptiness and pain in my heart, and free of Satan's harm and shackles. That was the only path for me. I prayed to God, wanting to become someone who heeds His words and obeys Him.

But when I wanted to give up my career and throw myself into my faith and duty, I ran into some roadblocks. I got a call from my son one day. The company was on the verge of closing and he wanted me to go back and rally to save it. I was really conflicted when I heard that. After 28 years of hard work, was it really going to end just like that? In just a moment I'd be left with nothing, like before my career took off. How would people see me and talk about me? How could I face others? I wouldn't have any way to make a living. I wasn't willing to give it up just like that. When I was planning to go back to rescue the company, both of my arms turned red and started itching like crazy, just like my face used to itch. I was in pain and really annoyed, too. Since I hadn't fully recovered yet, what if I went and then became unwell again? I knew that, when faced with that kind of hardship, speaking with God was the only solution. So I prayed to God: "God! I know I was on the wrong path before, chasing money and fame. Now I want to read Your words and do my duty every day, but my company is about to close down. I'm really conflicted. I don't want the business I worked hard on for over 20 years to close just like that. God, I truly don't know what to do. Please guide me." Then one morning I received a fellow apprentice's call, saying that our teacher had had a stroke on a plane, and was taken to the hospital but couldn't be saved. I realized that was God's

alert and warning for me, to show me that no matter how much money or renown I had, it couldn't save my life. After hanging up, I knelt before God in tears and prayed, "Oh God! I know that You heard my prayer. My teacher's death was a wake-up call for me. Now I understand that being able to live is Your salvation for me. When I was tortured by illness to the point that I wanted to die and end it all, You allowed me to hear Your voice, saving me. I want to treasure this precious chance today, and I can't repeat the same mistakes."

During that time, I read some of God's words that really touched me and made me see more clearly what we should pursue in life. God says: **"Though the various survival skills that people spend their lives mastering can offer an abundance of material comforts, they never bring true peace and consolation to one's heart, but instead make people constantly lose their direction, have difficulty controlling themselves, and miss every opportunity to learn the meaning of life; these survival skills create an undercurrent of anxiety about how to face death properly. People's lives are ruined in this way"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). **"People spend their lives chasing after money and fame; they clutch at these straws, thinking they are their only means of support, as if by having them they could live on, exempt from death. But only when they are about to die do they realize how distant these things are from them, how weak they are in the face of death, how easily they shatter, how lonely and helpless they are, with nowhere to turn. They realize that life cannot be bought with money or fame, that no matter how wealthy a person may be, no matter how lofty their position, all are equally poor and insignificant in the face of death. They realize that money cannot buy life, that fame cannot erase death, that neither money nor fame can lengthen a person's life by a single**

minute, a single second. The more people feel this way, the more they yearn to keep on living; the more people feel this way, the more they dread the approach of death. Only at this point do they truly realize that their lives do not belong to them, are not theirs to control, and that one has no say over whether one lives or dies—that all of this lies outside of one's control” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III).

God's words brightened my heart and they were enlightening. I thought of my teacher who'd chased fame and gain his whole life. There was fanfare wherever he went, and you could say he had both fame and fortune. But however accomplished he was, when he fell ill and his life was in danger, that fame couldn't save his life. That made me really see that however great a reputation someone had, it couldn't prolong their life a single second. No matter how much money they had, that couldn't buy health. I had been the same way. I had success and fame, but the torment of illness made me long for death. What use was a greater reputation? That couldn't remotely alleviate my emotional emptiness and fleshly pain. Then I genuinely experienced that fame and fortune are like shooting stars, empty things that just flash by, bringing momentary enjoyment and satisfaction. But wasn't I still an ordinary person even though I gained fame and fortune? I had to eat three meals a day to fill my belly, I needed a space to lie down. I faced my loneliness on my own, I withstood all my pain alone, I bore great fatigue by myself, and I handled my illness on my own. I was just like everyone else. Without faith, without coming before God and reading His words, we can't understand His sovereignty and we can't distinguish positive things from negative ones. All we can do is follow trends, those evil worldly trends, struggling forward step by step hobbled by the shackles of fame and fortune, toyed with, trampled on, and hurt by Satan. The deaths of my classmate and teacher were a warning to me. If I

stayed on the path of chasing fame and fortune, I'd end up just like them. Realizing this, only then did I start to feel true fear. I prayed to God, ready to cast off the shackles of fame and fortune, have real faith, and take the path of pursuing the truth and submitting to God.

Later, I saw a passage of God's words that made me resolute in my choice. Almighty God says: **"Are you willing to enjoy My blessings on earth, blessings that are akin to those in heaven? Are you willing to treasure understanding of Me, enjoyment of My words, and knowledge of Me as the most valuable and meaningful things in your life? Are you truly able to fully submit to Me, without thought to your own prospects? Are you truly able to allow yourselves to be put to death by Me, and led by Me, like a sheep? Are there any among you capable of achieving such things? Could it be that all who are accepted by Me and receive My promises are the ones who gain My blessings? Have you understood anything from these words? If I test you, can you truly put yourselves at My mercy, and, in the midst of these trials, search for My intentions and perceive My heart? I do not wish for you to be able to speak many touching words, or tell many exciting stories; rather, I ask that you are able to bear fine testimony to Me, and that you can fully and deeply enter into reality. If I did not speak directly, could you forsake everything around you and allow yourself to be used by Me? Is this not the reality that I require? Who is able to grasp the meaning in My words? Yet I ask that you no longer be weighed down by misgivings, that you be proactive in your entry and grasp the essence of My words. This will prevent you from misunderstanding My words, and from being unclear as to My meaning, and thus violating My administrative decrees. I hope that you grasp My intentions for you in My words. Think no more of your own prospects, and act as you have**

resolved before Me to submit to God's orchestrations in all things. All of those who stand within My household should do as much as they possibly can; you should offer the best of yourself to the last section of My work on earth. Are you truly willing to put such things into practice?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 4). After reading God's words, I was so moved my tears came gushing out. I could feel God right by my side, like I was face to face with Him, and He was asking me if I was ready to hand everything over to Him and accept His arrangements and submit to Him. I thought of Peter. His lifelong pursuit was to love and satisfy God, and ultimately, he was submissive to God until death, loving God to the utmost. He was crucified upside down for God's sake, becoming a resounding witness and living a life of meaning. I thought of the past, when I heard that meaningless thing my classmate said. I sacrificed my youth and my health, desperately chasing fame, fortune, and status for others' admiration, making my life utterly miserable. God plucked me out of the sea of people, and then saved me from the brink of death. I was so lucky to come before God and hear His voice, personally accepting His watering and shepherding. This was God's incredible salvation for me. In the last days, God has expressed so many truths, in order to cleanse and save us humans, so we can cast off satanic dispositions, be fully free from the constraints of Satan's influence, and no longer be harmed by Satan's corruption, before ultimately taking us into His kingdom. I couldn't miss this once-in-a-lifetime chance for God to save and perfect man, and I especially couldn't let God down for His painstaking effort. I had to have real faith and pursue the truth. At this thought, I told God in my heart, "God, I'm ready! Even if I'm left with nothing in my old age, no fame or fortune, I still want to submit to Your arrangements, to be

someone who heeds Your words and submits to You, and who does the duty of a created being.”

After that I handed the business over to my son to manage and I finally thoroughly said goodbye to my old life. I recovered my health. Before long, I took on a duty in the church, and began to experience people and matters that God had arranged. I now focus on pursuing the truth and learning lessons, and I feel a kind of peace I’ve never experienced before. Thank God!

87. I Finally Found the Path to Purification

By Richard, USA

I was born into a Catholic family and at 13 I began to study the catechism and was baptized, officially joining Catholicism. After that, I resolved to become a priest to serve God. I went to a monastery when I was 22 where I studied theology and the Scriptures and took some other courses. But some time passed and I still didn't feel any closer to God, and my desire to get married and have a family kept cropping up. I prayed and prayed, but I still couldn't keep it at bay. I'd sworn myself to chastity before God so that I could enter the kingdom of heaven but I wanted to forsake that commitment. Wasn't I sinning and lying to God? How could I get into God's kingdom? I was at the monastery for 10 years. After I graduated, I went to a monastery in Indonesia for another year but I kept having impure thoughts from time to time. I was really discouraged. After finishing my studies, I decided to become a regular parishioner. I went home and got married. But in day-to-day life, I'd often argue with my wife over petty household things and I wasn't very patient. Sometimes I'd lie to protect my own interests. I frequently came before God to confess and repent for these things but then I'd just keep doing them. I wanted to repair my relationship with God by going to Mass and saying prayers more, but that didn't fix my problems.

Then I came to the US in 2014. I met Li and Liu, a couple other parishioners at Mass. Whenever I had the chance I'd discuss matters of faith with them. I remember once when we were sharing Scripture, Liu said that he knew a devout deacon who was well-versed in the Bible who believed in Eastern Lightning. He said a couple of other fervent church members joined it, too. He wondered what kind of church Eastern Lightning was and why so

many avid believers had joined it. I was confused by this, too, because I'd also known a devout deacon who had joined Eastern Lightning. I didn't know what Eastern Lightning preached or why it drew in so many pious believers. Could it be inspired by the Holy Spirit? I figured I should check it out and see what was so special about what that church preached. I wondered if it could help me with my devotionals and with knowing God. At this thought, I told Li and Liu that I wanted to go check out The Church of Almighty God. They agreed to go with me.

When we went, a sister played a video for us, The Origin and Development of The Church of Almighty God. From this, I learned that the Lord Jesus had returned, just as I'd long hoped for. He is Almighty God in the flesh who is expressing truths to do the work of judgment in the last days. That's why people from all denominations who love the truth and long for God's appearance read Almighty God's words, see that they're the truth and God's voice, and accept Almighty God. Also, Almighty God's gospel has spread from China in the East to many western countries, fulfilling the Lord Jesus' prophecy: **"As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even to the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be"** (Matthew 24:27). I was really surprised that that is how this prophecy is fulfilled. I'd read it all those years without understanding it. Then a brother played a gospel movie called The Bible and God. This one moved me even more deeply and I saw there are a great deal of mysteries in the Bible. I'd read so many spiritual books but never found any theologian or Bible expositor who had ever so clearly explained the truth behind the Bible, how it came to be, and its relationship to God. I gained so much from that movie. I could see why so many enthusiastic believers accepted Almighty God after hearing His words. I decided to look into Almighty God's work of the last days.

In our discussions, brothers and sisters from The Church of Almighty God said that in the last days, Almighty God expresses truths to do the work of judgment beginning with God's house to cleanse and save mankind once and for all. I was confused to hear this, because the Lord Jesus said **"It is consummated"** on the cross. That should mean that God's work to save mankind was finished, so why would God need to judge mankind to purify and save us? I wanted to find out but it was getting late, so I arranged to come back the next day. I felt excited on the way home. I'd learned quite a bit from that day's fellowship and felt like I'd become closer to the Lord. It seemed likely that Almighty God's work was indeed the Lord's work in the last days. It would be incredible if the Lord really had returned and I could live alongside Him just like Peter did. This thought was really exciting and made me look forward to the next day's gathering even more.

As soon as I got off work the next day, I rushed to our gathering place and lost no time asking the sister, "You say that the Lord Jesus has returned and expresses truths to do the work of judgment of the last days. How can that be? On the cross, He said **'It is consummated.'** That means God's work to save mankind was completed. Our sins are forgiven through our faith—we're justified and saved by faith, and when the Lord comes in the last days He can take us straight up into His kingdom. Why would He do more salvation work?"

The sister said, "The Lord Jesus said **'It is consummated'** because His redemption work was complete. It didn't mean that all of God's work to save mankind had been finished. If we determine that God's work to save mankind is done because the Lord Jesus said **'It is consummated'** and that He won't do new work when He returns, why would the Lord Jesus speak these prophecies? The Lord said: **'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth,**

is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come' (John 16:12–13). **'He that rejects Me, and receives not My words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day'** (John 12:48). There's also 1 Peter 4:17: **'For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.'** These prophecies show that in the last days, when the Lord returns, He will express more truths and do the work of judgment, in order to fully cleanse and save mankind. If we go by human notions and say that God's salvation work is completely finished, then how would these prophecies be fulfilled? The Bible also prophesies that in the last days, the Lord will return to separate the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares, the wise virgins from the foolish, and the good servants from the evil, sorting each according to their kind. It's just as the Lord Jesus said: **'He that sows the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear'** (Matthew 13:37–43). Revelation also prophesies that God will make a group of overcomers in the last days and that His kingdom will come to earth. This is all work the Lord does in the last days. If we follow the human understanding that the Lord Jesus saying 'It is consummated' means

that God's work to save mankind is totally finished, then how would those prophecies be fulfilled? So this understanding of the Lord's words is clearly incorrect, and totally out of line with the Lord's meaning and the reality of God's work."

I was completely convinced by this sister's fellowship, and I nodded my head as I listened. Why hadn't I ever seen something so obvious? She went on to read several passages of Almighty God's words: **"For all that man may have been redeemed and forgiven of his sins, it can only be considered as God not remembering the transgressions of man and not treating man in accordance with his transgressions. However, when man, who lives in a body of flesh, has not been set free from sin, he can only continue to sin, endlessly revealing his corrupt satanic disposition. This is the life that man leads, an endless cycle of sinning and being forgiven. The majority of mankind sin in the day only to confess in the evening. This way, even though the sin offering is forever effective for man, it will not be able to save man from sin. Only half the work of salvation has been completed, for man still has a corrupt disposition"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Mystery of the Incarnation (4)).

"Though Jesus did much work among man, He only completed the redemption of all mankind and became man's sin offering; He did not rid man of all his corrupt disposition. Fully saving man from the influence of Satan not only required Jesus to become the sin offering and bear the sins of man, but it also required God to do even greater work to rid man completely of his satanically corrupted disposition. And so, now that man has been forgiven of his sins, God has returned to the flesh to lead man into the new age, and begun the work of chastisement and judgment. This work has brought man into a higher realm. All those who submit under His dominion shall enjoy higher

truth and receive greater blessings. They shall truly live in the light, and they shall gain the truth, the way, and the life” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). “The purpose of God’s work of chastisement and judgment is in essence meant to purify humanity, for the sake of the ultimate rest; without such cleansing, none of humanity could be classified into different categories according to kind, or enter into rest. This work is humanity’s only path to enter into rest. Only God’s work of purification will cleanse humans of their unrighteousness, and only His work of chastisement and judgment will bring to light those disobedient elements of humanity, thereby separating those who can be saved from those who cannot, and those who will remain from those who will not. When this work ends, those people who are allowed to remain will all be cleansed and enter a higher state of humanity in which they will enjoy a more wonderful second human life upon the earth; in other words, they will commence their human day of rest, and coexist with God. After those who are not allowed to remain have been chastised and judged, their true colors will be entirely exposed, after which they will all be destroyed and, like Satan, will no longer be permitted to survive upon the earth. The humanity of the future will no longer include any of this type of people; such people are not fit to enter the land of the ultimate rest, nor are they fit to join in the day of rest that God and humanity will share, for they are the targets of punishment and are wicked, unrighteous people. ... The entire purpose behind God’s ultimate work of punishing evil and rewarding good is to thoroughly purify all humans so that He may bring a purely holy humanity into eternal rest. This stage of His work is the most crucial; it is the final stage of the whole of His work of

management” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together).

After reading these words of Almighty God, the sister shared this fellowship: “The Lord Jesus did the work of redemption in the Age of Grace, redeeming mankind of their sins. As long as we believe in Him, pray, confess, and repent, our sins are forgiven. We can enjoy the Lord’s grace, and won’t be condemned and punished under the law for our sins. This is the real meaning of ‘saved by faith’ and it’s what the Lord Jesus’ work of redemption achieved. Our sins are forgiven by the Lord Jesus and we don’t commit obvious sins anymore; sometimes we do good things. But we’re still not free from sin. We still lie and deceive for our own interests, we’re greedy, jealous, hateful, and harbor evil thoughts. We can’t resist the temptation of worldly trends, we long for money and love vanity. We condescendingly reproach people who do things we don’t like. We’re full of satanic dispositions like arrogance, deceitfulness, being sick of the truth, and more. These satanic dispositions are deeper and more entrenched than outward sins. They’re instilled in us by Satan and are the root of sinning and resisting God. Until these things are resolved, we still can’t help but sin and we can’t be free of sin’s bonds. The Bible says: **‘Be you holy; for I am holy’** (1 Peter 1:16). God is holy and so is His kingdom. He can’t allow filthy human beings in. Those of us who sin every day are servants of sin, so how could we be fit to enter God’s kingdom? The Lord Jesus’ work of redemption was just one part of God’s work to save mankind, not all of it. Our sins have just been forgiven but we haven’t been freed from sin or cast off Satan’s influence. God has yet to completely gain mankind. Almighty God has come in the last days. He expresses truths and does the work of judgment to cleanse our corrupt dispositions and resolve our sinful satanic nature in opposition to God, so we can totally cast off the shackles of sin, be

fully saved, and enter God's kingdom. Almighty God's appearance and work also reveals good and evil servants, sheep and goats, wheat and tares, wise and foolish virgins. Those who refuse to hear God's voice, who deny and condemn Almighty God's work of the last days are the foolish virgins, the tares, the evil servants who'll ultimately fall into disaster, weeping and gnashing their teeth. Those who recognize God's voice in Almighty God's words and accept His work of the last days are the wise virgins, the wheat, and the sheep. They undergo God's judgment of the last days, are purified, and ultimately brought into God's kingdom. This completely fulfills the prophecies in Revelation. So when God's work of judgment in the last days comes to a close, God's management work to save mankind will be fully completed."

Her fellowship was eye-opening for me. I realized that the Lord Jesus only did the work of redemption and only Almighty God's judgment work in the last days can fully cleanse and save mankind. We're redeemed of our sins because of our faith, but our sinful nature is still deeply entrenched, which is why we live in a state of constantly sinning and confessing. All I could do before was force myself not to sin, read the Scriptures, and follow the monastery's rules, but this couldn't stop me from sinning. Then I understood that the only way to resolve the problem of sinfulness is to be judged and cleansed by God in the last days. I eagerly asked this sister how Almighty God performs the work of judgment to cleanse people. She played a video of a reading of God's words. Almighty God says: **"Christ of the last days uses a variety of truths to teach man, to expose the substance of man, and to dissect the words and deeds of man. These words comprise various truths, such as man's duty, how man should obey God, how man should be loyal to God, how man ought to live out normal humanity, as well as the wisdom and the disposition of God,**

and so on. These words are all directed at the substance of man and his corrupt disposition. In particular, the words that expose how man spurns God are spoken in regard to how man is an embodiment of Satan, and an enemy force against God. In undertaking His work of judgment, God does not simply make clear the nature of man with a few words; He exposes, deals with, and prunes over the long term. All these different methods of exposure, dealing, and pruning cannot be substituted with ordinary words, but with the truth of which man is utterly bereft. Only methods such as these can be called judgment; only through judgment of this kind can man be subdued and thoroughly convinced about God, and moreover gain true knowledge of God. What the work of judgment brings about is man's understanding of the true face of God and the truth about his own rebelliousness. The work of judgment allows man to gain much understanding of the will of God, of the purpose of God's work, and of the mysteries that are incomprehensible to him. It also allows man to recognize and know his corrupt essence and the roots of his corruption, as well as to discover the ugliness of man. These effects are all brought about by the work of judgment, for the essence of this work is actually the work of opening up the truth, the way, and the life of God to all those who have faith in Him. This work is the work of judgment done by God" (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Christ Does the Work of Judgment With the Truth). She continued her fellowship after we watched the video. "Almighty God expresses truths in the last days to judge and cleanse people. He expresses all the truths corrupt mankind needs to understand and enter into to be cleansed and fully saved. He has revealed the mysteries of His 6,000-year management plan, and unveiled the mysteries of God's work in the flesh, the mysteries of His judgment work in the last days and of His names. He

also exposes the root of why mankind sins and opposes God and the truth of our corruption by Satan and all sorts of corrupt states. On top of that, He reveals God's holy, righteous, unoffendable disposition and tells us who pleases Him, who disgusts Him, who can enter God's kingdom and who will be punished, and the destination and outcome for each type of person. He also gives us the path to transform our life dispositions. God's chosen people are now undergoing the judgment and chastisement of God's words, and are finally seeing how deeply Satan has corrupted us, that we're full of satanic dispositions, like arrogance and deceitfulness. We don't remotely live out a human likeness. We also see God's righteous disposition that tolerates no offense and have a God-fearing heart, start to truly repent and hate ourselves, and become willing to forsake the flesh and practice the truth. Then our corrupt dispositions are gradually changed and we're no longer so rebellious and defiant toward God, but we gain some submission for Him." After her fellowship she played a testimonial video for me called The True Light Appears. The main character has some small talent that he lords over others, and he looks down on everyone. He's haughty and condescending and wants everyone to listen to him. He's a believer and he prays and confesses a lot, but he can't help but lose his temper and reprimand others. All his colleagues keep their distance and his wife and daughter are afraid of him. He doesn't have a single confidant. Living in sin, he suffers terribly. After he accepts Almighty God's work of the last days, the judgment and revelation of God's words shows him that always putting himself first, being self-aggrandizing, and demanding others' obedience is because he's arrogant and unreasonable, and that these are expressions of satanic dispositions. This is disgusting to God and alienating for others. Once he realizes this, he genuinely hates himself and is filled with regret. Then he takes a softer approach toward others and when faced

with a problem, he forsakes the flesh, seeks the truth, and listens to others. He's gradually become less arrogant than before.

Watching this video was exciting for me. I saw that Almighty God's words are the truth, that they really can cleanse and transform people. I started reading Almighty God's words every chance I got and watching gospel movies and hymn videos from The Church of Almighty God. The more I watched, the clearer I felt in my heart. I became certain that Almighty God's words are the truth and the voice of the Holy Spirit, that Almighty God is the returned Lord. I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. Thank God.

88. Amidst Torture and Torment I Saw ...

By Li Hua, China

One day in September 2017, I went to Sister Fang Ming's house for a gathering. As soon as I knocked on the door, the door opened, and a hand suddenly pulled me into the house. I was terrified, and when I came to my senses, I realized that they were plainclothes policemen, and that Fang Ming had already been arrested. Afterward, they took me to the "Legal Training Base," which was a brainwashing center for Christians. There, I saw several brothers and sisters who had been arrested. One sister told me that the police had seized more than 30,000 yuan of the church's money, 4 laptops, and 210,000 yuan from her and two other sisters. I was very angry when I heard this, because the great red dragon was frantically arresting Christians and seizing the church's money. It was truly evil! I silently swore to myself that I would rely on God to stand firm in my testimony, and that I would never compromise with Satan!

At the brainwashing center, the police put us into separate rooms, and a guard was assigned to each one of us to watch us 24 hours a day. Everything we ate, when we slept, and even when we went to the toilet were under their control. They also hired some people to stand guard outside the rooms. Every day from seven in the morning, they played dramas at a very loud volume until eleven or twelve at night, and then they switched on the radio to play audio dramas and the like until three or four in the morning. During this period, the police came to interrogate me from time to time about my belief in God. They would threaten and intimidate me when they saw that I wasn't saying anything. They even gathered us together and preached atheist ideas. The purpose was to make us deny and betray God. Listening to those words made me feel sick.

They forcibly brainwashed us for more than 20 days. I couldn't eat or sleep well every day, and I was always on edge. Later, the police found my identity information, retrieved the call records in my mobile phone, and began to interrogate me. One morning, the police took out photos of a few sisters and asked me, "Do you know them?" I saw that these sisters were all in charge of taking care of the church's money. I would never betray them, so I said, "I don't recognize them." A police officer rushed over and violently slapped me twice, and then punched me more than a dozen times in the same place on my right arm. The pain in my arm felt as if it was broken. He gnashed his teeth as he was hitting me, asking: "Don't you know them? You were in contact with them half a year ago. Did you think we didn't know? If you don't tell us what you know, I will break your arm." Then, he made me squat and extend my arms out straight. My right arm hurt so much that I couldn't lift it at all. He hit my arms and legs with a badminton racket, as well as my mouth and chin, until my lips and chin went numb. After squatting for more than ten minutes, they asked me if I knew a brother. I was shocked. They must have found his name in my call records. If I didn't tell them, I couldn't imagine what torment would come next, but no matter what, I couldn't become a Judas and betray my brother. I said calmly, "I don't know him." Then three police officers surrounded me and grabbed my collar, and shoved me back and forth between them until I was dizzy and staggering. I was a little scared, thinking, "With my small body, if this torture continues, will I be able to bear it?" I prayed over and over in my heart, asking God to protect me. I thought of Daniel. When he was thrown into the lions' den, he prayed to God, and God sealed the lions' mouths, so the lions did not bite him. I saw that everything is in God's hands, so without God's permission, the police couldn't do anything to me. At these thoughts, I felt less nervous and afraid. They shoved and dragged

me for more than 20 minutes, after which the police captain suddenly said, “I still have some things to do. I’ll take care of you tomorrow!” After that, he hurried away. I thought of how the police would torture me tomorrow if I didn’t tell them. Would I be able to bear it? Thinking of this, I was very nervous and afraid, so I kept praying to God. I suffered through these thoughts until dawn. I felt dizzy, my chest was tight, and it became difficult to breathe. The person guarding me was so frightened that she called the head instructor and the doctor at the brainwashing center. When they checked my blood pressure, my lowest was 110mmHg, and highest was 180mmHg. The head instructor was afraid that I would die at the center and the responsibility would fall on his head, so he rushed me to the hospital. The doctor said I had coronary heart disease and needed to recuperate, and then gave me an IV drip and put me on oxygen. After hearing what the doctor said, the police saw that I wouldn’t die right away, so they immediately asked the nurse to take me off oxygen and remove the IV, and then they took me back to the brainwashing center.

After returning to the brainwashing center, my blood pressure remained very high, and it wasn’t coming down. I was also extremely light-headed and couldn’t even walk without having to support myself on the wall. But the police didn’t care about my life at all. During the day, they forced me to watch TV. The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China was broadcast all the time, and at night they turned on the radio until three or four in the morning. I was tormented so badly that my body got worse and worse. I’d often get chest tightness and have difficulty breathing. Every time I relapsed, they made me take seven or eight emergency heart pills, just to stop me from dying on the spot. The police also often came to threaten me, asking me to betray my brothers and sisters, and to force me to tell them the whereabouts of the church’s money. This

kind of continuous interrogation and torture made me extremely nervous, and my health declined more and more. My whole upper body was swollen and painful, and it felt like my internal organs were about to fall out of place with even the slightest movement. Every day I had to keep my arms clenched around my torso, and I had to take every step carefully. When I slept, neither lying down nor sitting worked for me. I'd try one, then the other over and over until I had no energy left and just passed out for a little while. As time went on, my heart became very weak, and I felt that I might really not be able to make it. I kept praying, asking God to give me faith.

One day, I remembered a hymn "Following Christ Is Ordained by God": "God has ordained that we follow Christ and go through trials and tribulations. If we truly love God, we should submit to His sovereignty and arrangements. To go through trials and tribulations is to be blessed by God, and God says that the rougher the path we walk, the more it can show our love. The path we walk today was preordained by God. To follow Christ of the last days is the greatest blessing of all" (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). As I sang this song over and over to myself in my head, I understood that what kind of environment each person encounters in their life of believing in God, what kind of tempering they go through, and how much suffering they endure has been preordained by God long ago. I had to submit and rely on God to experience it. As I sang, I gained some faith.

Later, the head instructor made me read books and watch videos that blasphemed God and slandered The Church of Almighty God, and brought in people to give me brainwashing classes. In those days, I was brainwashed during the day, and the TV and radio pounded my ears with noise at night. In addition, I was worried that the police could come to interrogate me at any time, so I was very nervous. My episodes of chest tightness and pain became more frequent. A few days later, the head

instructor asked me to write a letter promising I would no longer believe in God. I refused to write anything, and he said, “Even as sick as you are, you’re still resisting. Why bother? I’ll write a draft for you, and you can just copy it. The words on it won’t be what you said or what you really think. Then, I’ll put in a good word for you and have you released. This is cheating the system, do you understand? I’ll help you because you seem like a decent person. Now, just copy it out, and then go home and see a doctor.” I thought what he said made sense. I would only be going through the motions, not betraying God in my heart, so I said to him, “Let me go back and think about it.” Back in my room, I kept turning it over in my mind, “I’ve heard before that the police give the brothers and sisters schizophrenia-inducing injections and drugs. This is the kind of despicable method they use to make us betray our brothers and sisters and give up the church’s money. Most of the people I had contact with were leaders and workers, as well as some brothers and sisters who kept the church’s money. If one day the police shot me full of schizophrenia-inducing medicine or drugged me, and I lost consciousness and sold them out, I could heavily damage the interests of the church. That would be committing a great evil, and I would definitely be punished in the future. If I wrote the letter, I would be able to leave sooner, and I wouldn’t betray my brothers and sisters. However, I would be betraying God and denying God, so what would be the point of living after that? No, I can’t let myself write this letter.” The next day, the head instructor was angry when he saw that I hadn’t written the letter. He shouted, “The government has ordered that believers in Almighty God like you have to write and sign the letter before you can be released. No matter how sick you are, you have to follow the government’s regulations, so hurry up and write it!” He called three guards in to help persuade me, and said, “You won’t be able to leave unless you

sign the letter. The government spent a lot of money to reeducate you people, and even designed special classes. We took the government's money, and we have to do what the government pays us for, so if you don't sign, we will torture you every day until you do." Their intimidation and beleaguerment made me very anxious and I couldn't stand the tightening pain in my chest. Although I prayed in my heart, I was only going through the motions, it wasn't sincere. In reality, I didn't want to suffer anymore, and I had no faith in God. I constantly worried that the police would put drugs in my meals. What would happen if I lost control over my mind and betrayed my brothers and sisters? My punishment would be even more severe in the future, so I might as well just write and sign the letter. As soon as I thought of this, I compromised and signed the letter. I suddenly felt like my heart had been hollowed out, and darkness descended over my mind. I felt very uneasy, and I was terrified. I realized that by signing the "Three Letters," I was stamped with the mark of the beast. I was a Judas who had betrayed God, and I had offended God's disposition. I felt a deep sense of remorse, and I hated myself, feeling that I didn't deserve to live. While my guard was asleep, I swallowed my remaining fifteen or sixteen antihypertensive pills. A few hours later, I felt dizzy, so lying on the bed, I prayed to God with tears in my eyes, "God! I signed the 'Three Letters.' I betrayed You and humiliated Your name. I don't deserve to live. God! If I have a next life, I still want to believe in You and follow You..." Before I knew it, I fell asleep. The next morning, I suddenly heard the whistle to wake up. I opened my eyes and pinched myself a couple of times. It turned out that I wasn't dead. I hated myself. Why wasn't I dead? That was when I remembered a hymn of God's word titled **"What God Makes Perfect Is Faith"**: **"The utmost faith and love are required from us in the work of the last days. We may stumble from the slightest carelessness, for this**

stage of work is different from all the previous ones: What God is perfecting is mankind's faith, which is both invisible and intangible. What God does is convert words to faith, to love, and to life. People must reach a point where they have endured hundreds of refinements and possess faith greater than Job's. They must endure incredible suffering and all manner of torture without ever leaving God. When they are obedient unto death, and have great faith in God, then this stage of God's work is complete" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (8)). God's word gave me a surge of complicated feelings, and my tears began to flow. I cried and prayed to God, "God! You protected me. I know this is Your mercy for me, as long as I can still do service for You, I am ready to live on. Even if I die after my service, I will have no complaints."

Although I don't want to die anymore, I was still in a very depressed state. Over those few days, I leaned feebly on the headboard, closed my eyes, and sat in a motionless daze. It felt like the whole world had nothing to do with me. One day, when I went to the bathroom, Fang Ming, who had been arrested too, threw me a ball of toilet paper. I opened it while my guard wasn't there. The note written on it said, "Sister, don't be discouraged, and don't misunderstand God. I wrote down a hymn of God's word for you to read." I cried as I read it:

God Likes Those With Resolve

1 To follow the practical God, we must have this resolve: No matter how great the environments we encounter, nor what kind of difficulties we face, and no matter how weak or negative we are, we cannot lose faith in our dispositional change or in the words that God has spoken. God has made a promise to mankind, and this requires

people to have resolve, faith, and perseverance to bear it. God does not like cowards; He likes people with resolve. Even if you've revealed a lot of corruption, even if you've taken the wrong path many times, or committed many transgressions, complained about God, or from within religion resisted God or harbored blasphemy against Him in your heart, and so on—God doesn't look at all that. God only looks at whether someone pursues the truth and whether they can one day change.

2 God understands every person in the way that a mother understands her child. He understands each person's difficulties, their weaknesses, and their needs. Even more than that, God understands what difficulties, weaknesses, and failures people will face while entering into the process of changing their disposition. These are the things that God understands best. This means that God examines the depths of people's hearts. No matter how weak you are, as long as you don't renounce God's name, or leave Him and this way, then you'll always have the chance to achieve dispositional change. If you have this chance, then you have hope of surviving, and therefore of being saved by God.

—The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Path of Practice Toward Changing One's Disposition

God's words were so soothing—they warmed and comforted my heart. I wept bitterly and sang the hymn in my head several times. I had done something that hurt God, but not only had God not punished me, He had moved my sister to copy out God's word to support me when I was in my most pained and hopeless moments. I walked to the corner of the balcony and fell to the floor as I cried and prayed to God, "God! I signed the 'Three Letters' and betrayed You. I am unworthy of Your mercy for me. I don't

have the words to express Your love and salvation for me. God! I wish to repent to You. Please guide me.”

Later, the police released me because they couldn't get anything from interrogating me. When I was released, they warned me not to believe in God anymore, and ordered my husband to watch me 24 hours a day. After returning home, the town government asked the village committee to inform the whole village that I had been a political prisoner for believing in God, and to ask the entire village to monitor me. Everywhere I went, people stared at me, and I had to endure pointing fingers, strange looks, sarcasm, ridicule, abuse, and all manner of unpleasantness. My husband used to support my belief in God, but after my release, he persecuted me and often scolded me for no reason. My son couldn't stand the ridicule and insults from the villagers, so he treated me as an enemy and ignored me. This all made me very upset. Especially when I remembered that I had signed the “Three Letters” under the persecution of the great red dragon, and had thus committed a serious sin before God, I felt that God definitely wouldn't save me, and that my brothers and sisters would look down on me. I felt like I had fallen into a bottomless pit, and I passed every day like a walking corpse. I lived in a state of extreme pain and torment, and it felt like my eyes were awash with tears every day. During that time, I couldn't read God's words, and I didn't dare to contact my brothers and sisters, so I often came before God to pray, asking God to guide me in understanding His will.

After that, I found an opportunity to go to my mother's house. She fellowshiped with me, telling me not to misunderstand God, saying that I had to learn a lesson in situations such as these. She also snuck me a copy of God's word for me to bring back into my house. One day, I read in God's word: **“Most people have transgressed and besmirched themselves in**

certain ways. For example, some people have resisted God and said blasphemous things; some people have rejected God's commission and not performed their duty, and were spurned by God; some people have betrayed God when they were faced with temptations; some have betrayed God by signing the 'Three Letters' when they were under arrest; some have stolen offerings; some have squandered offerings; some have frequently disturbed the church life and caused harm to God's chosen people; some have formed cliques and handled others roughly, making a shambles of the church; some have often spread notions and death, harming the brothers and sisters; and some have engaged in fornication and promiscuity, and have been a terrible influence. Suffice it to say that everyone has their transgressions and stains. Yet some people are able to accept the truth and repent, while others cannot and would die before repenting. So people should be treated according to their nature essence and their consistent behavior. Those who can repent are those who truly believe in God; but as for the truly unrepentant, those who should be cleared out and expelled will be cleared out and expelled" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). "Each person who has submitted to being conquered by God's words will have ample opportunity for salvation; God's salvation of each of these people will show His utmost leniency. In other words, they will be shown the utmost tolerance. As long as people turn back from the wrong path, and as long as they can repent, God will give them opportunities to obtain His salvation" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Put Aside the Blessings of Status and Understand God's Will to Bring Salvation to Man). After reading God's word, I was especially moved. I knelt on the ground and prayed to God with bitter tears in my eyes. I saw that God's righteous disposition not only contains majesty and wrath, but also mercy

and tolerance for people. God is righteous, and He does not determine people's outcome based on their temporary transgressions, but rather on the motives and backgrounds of their actions, the consequences of their actions, whether they truly repent, and their attitude toward the truth. God hates and despises people's betrayal, but God also saves people to the greatest extent possible. If someone only betrays God in a moment of weakness, hasn't denied and betrayed Him from the heart, and is willing to repent, then God is merciful and gives them another chance. Recognizing this, I felt even more indebted to God, and even more remorseful. I swore an oath to God that whether or not He wanted me, I would follow Him, steadfastly pursue the truth, and pursue dispositional change. Even if there was no good ending for me in the future, I would have no regrets.

After that, I kept wondering why I signed the "Three Letters" and betrayed God when I was arrested and persecuted by the CCP. I thought about how I had wanted to stand firm in my testimony when I was first arrested, but as police intimidated and threatened me more and more harshly, and as my illness became more serious, I lost faith and completely submitted to cowardice and fear. I was terrified that if the police injected me with schizophrenia-inducing medicine or gave me psychoactive drugs, and then I unconsciously betrayed my brothers and sisters, my punishment would be even more severe later, so I thought it better to sign the "Three Letters." I believed that as long as the interests of the church weren't damaged, the punishment I receive in the future would be lighter. So to protect my own interests, I signed the letters and betrayed God. In reality, God had allowed the great red dragon to persecute me to perfect my faith, so that I could live by God's words and defeat Satan. But I didn't seek God's will at all, nor did I consider what I should do to stand firm and satisfy God. All I thought about was my own ending and destination. I saw

that I was so selfish and despicable! Also, I had always thought that regardless of the circumstances, if someone betrayed God, their ending would be the same as Judas, that they would definitely be punished. But these were entirely my notions and imaginings. God is righteous, and He scrutinizes the depths of people's hearts. He watches my every word and deed. If I had betrayed my brothers and sisters to protect my own interests, and thereby become an accomplice and minion of the great red dragon, then I would definitely end up like Judas and be punished, but if I was forcibly drugged by the police and I betrayed God when I wasn't in control of myself, then God would treat me differently in accordance with the situation and context. But I didn't know God's righteous disposition, and I didn't know God's criteria for determining people's ending. I lived trapped in my own notions and imaginings, fell for Satan's trick, and committed a serious transgression. However, God still gave me the opportunity to repent. This was God's mercy on me.

Later, I read another passage of God's word: **“Regardless of how ‘powerful’ Satan is, regardless of how audacious and ambitious it is, regardless of how great is its ability to inflict damage, regardless of how wide-ranging are the techniques with which it corrupts and lures man, regardless of how clever are the tricks and schemes with which it intimidates man, regardless of how changeable is the form in which it exists, it has never been able to create a single living thing, has never been able to set down laws or rules for the existence of all things, and has never been able to rule and control any object, whether animate or inanimate. Within the cosmos and the firmament, there is not a single person or object that was born from it, or exists because of it; there is not a single person or object that is ruled by it, or controlled by it. On the contrary, it not only has to live under the dominion of God, but,**

moreover, must obey all of God's orders and commands. Without God's permission, it is difficult for Satan to touch even a drop of water or grain of sand upon the land; without God's permission, Satan is not even free to move the ants about upon the land, let alone mankind, who was created by God" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique I).

From God's words, I realized that God has the final say in everything in the universe. No matter how insidious or rampant the CCP may be, it is a pawn in God's hands. It is a service-doer God uses as a tool to perfect His chosen people. But I didn't know God's authority, and I was always worried that the police would give me schizophrenia-inducing shots and drugs, and that if I betrayed my brothers and sisters when I was not fully conscious, the interests of the church could have suffered greatly. However, whether I was given such drugs by the police and whether I would lose conscious control of myself were all in God's hands. Without God's permission, the police couldn't do anything to me. I saw that when things happened to me, I really had no faith in God, I couldn't see through Satan's tricks, and my stature was pitifully small. When I recognized this, my remorse only grew deeper. I believed in God for many years and enjoyed the watering and supply of so much of God's word, but I didn't actually know much about God. I even signed the "Three Letters" and betrayed God. At this thought, I felt even more indebted to God, so I prayed, "God! If there is still a chance, I am willing to go through another arrest, I want to forsake my body, humiliate the great red dragon, and atone for my sins."

One day in October 2018, seven plainclothes police officers suddenly broke into my house and arrested me. I knew that this was God giving me a chance to repent. No matter whether the police beat me to death or sent me to jail, this time, I had to rely on God to stand firm. The police took me to the interrogation room, handcuffed me to a tiger chair, grabbed my hair, and

slapped my face a dozen or so times. The searing pain from the blows stung, and my face immediately swelled up. A police officer asked me if I knew so-and-so. I said I didn't. He flew into a rage, rushed over, and started to slap me hard. Next, another police officer asked me to confirm the leader's name, but I didn't answer. He grabbed my ear angrily, pinched along the edge of my ear with his fingernails bit by bit, and pressed me for answers as he continued to pinch. I kept shaking my head and said nothing. He was so angry that he found a handful of metal clips, and then said with a sinister smile, "If you won't talk, you'll suffer!" He put metal clips on the edge of my ears. Every time the clips pinched, the pain felt as if it was piercing my heart, my face kept spasming, and my whole head felt like it was being roasted on a stove. I closed my eyes and clenched my teeth, and as my body shuddered involuntarily, I prayed over and over in my heart, asking God to give me the resolve to suffer. I remembered God's words: **"Faith is like a single log bridge: Those who cling abjectly to life will have difficulty in crossing it, but those who are ready to sacrifice themselves can pass over, sure of foot and worry-free. If man harbors timid and fearful thoughts, it is because Satan has fooled them, afraid that we will cross the bridge of faith to enter into God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 6). I realized that the police were torturing me in this way because they wanted me to betray God and sell out my brothers and sisters. I couldn't let God down. I had to rely on God to stand firm. After a few minutes, the police removed the clips and brought out another photo of a sister for me to identify. I said, "I don't know her." The police angrily yanked my hand out in front of me and forcefully yanked up on my fingers. I screamed in pain and instinctively clenched my hand, but he pulled each of my fingers straight and yanked them upward. I felt as if he was breaking my fingers, and the pain was so

intense I was about to break. When they saw that I still wasn't speaking, the two policemen opened my handcuffs, twisted my hands behind my back, put them through the hole in the lower part of the back of the tiger chair, and handcuffed me again, and then pressed down forcefully on the handcuffs. It felt like my hands and arms were being torn off, and I screamed in pain. I felt very weak in my heart, so I prayed to God with tears in my eyes, asking God to give me faith and the resolve to suffer. At this time, I remembered a hymn of God's word: **"Almighty God, the Head of all things, wields His kingly power from His throne. He rules over the universe and all things, and He is in the act of guiding us on the whole earth. We shall at every moment be close to Him, and come before Him in quietness, never missing a single moment, and with lessons for us to learn at all times"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 6). God's word gave me the enlightenment I needed, and suddenly my heart felt brighter. Almighty God is the great King of the universe, and He has the final say in everything in the universe. My life and death were also in the hands of God. If God didn't allow it, the police couldn't do anything to me. These devils had God's permission to torture me like this, because God wanted to perfect my faith. I also remembered I had previously signed the "Three Letters" and betrayed God under the persecution of the great red dragon, but God did not cast me out because of my transgression, and used His words to provide for and comfort me. This time I couldn't disappoint God again. I had to stand firm, humiliate Satan, and comfort God. They pressed on the handcuffs four times in a row, after which I felt dizzy, I was shaking and twitching all over, and I felt like I was about to die. Then the police threw mineral water on my face, and pulled open my collar and poured cold water into my shirt. I was covered in sweat, and so shocked by the cold water that my whole body was trembling and

shivering. After a while, the police turned off the lights, turned on two flashlights, pointed the powerful beams of light at my face, and ordered me to keep my eyes open and not move. I prayed to God in my heart, asking Him to keep me from selling out my brothers and sisters or betraying Him.

At this time, I remembered a hymn **“I Am Determined to Love God”**:

1 Oh God! I have seen that Your righteousness and holiness are so lovely. I resolve to pursue the truth, and I am determined to love You. May You open my spiritual eyes and may Your Spirit move my heart. Make it so that, as I come before You, I throw off all that is negative, cease to be constrained by any person, matter, or thing, and lay my heart completely bare before You, and make it so that I may offer my entire being before You. However You may test me, I am ready. Now, I give no consideration to my future prospects, nor am I under the yoke of death. With a heart that loves You, I desire to seek the way of life.

2 Every matter, everything—it is all in Your hands; my fate is in Your hands and You hold my very life in Your hand. Now, I seek to love You, and regardless of whether You let me love You, regardless of how Satan disturbs, I am determined to love You. I myself am willing to seek after You and to follow You. Now even if You want to abandon me, I will still follow You. Whether You want me or not, I will still love You, and in the end I must gain You. I offer up my heart to You, and no matter what You do, I will follow You for my entire life. No matter what, I must love You and I must gain You; I will not rest until I have gained You.

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Concerning the Practice of Prayer

As I hummed this hymn over and over in my mind, I remembered the martyrdom of the saints of all past eras. Stephen was stoned to death, Jacob

was beheaded, Peter was crucified upside down for God.... They all sacrificed their lives to testify to God, but I felt I couldn't take it anymore after just a little suffering. I saw that I had too little faith, and I swore a silent oath to myself: No matter how the police tortured me, I would never betray God or sell out my brothers and sisters. Miraculously, the strong beams of light from the two flashlights were facing me, but I didn't feel dazzled at all. It was as if I was looking at the light from two candles. I was elated, and thanked God in my heart. I knew that this was all God's care and protection. Later, a police officer said, "For people like you who believe in Almighty God, your sons and daughters can't join the army or work in public service." He also said he would post my photo on the Internet and spread rumors that I had betrayed the church so all the brothers and sisters would reject me. I knew this was just one of their tricks, and I didn't submit.

At about two in the afternoon the next day, a police officer came in. He attempted to trick me by saying, "If you don't want to tell us anything right now, that's fine. If you write a letter renouncing your faith in God, we will let you go home, and we will never bother you again. I have the authority to promise you that." He kept pressing me to write it, but I refused. He charged over and slapped me seven or eight times in a fit of rage, and then another police officer also came over and viciously kicked my calf bone, sending a piercing pain racing through my body. I was handcuffed behind my back, and he pressed my back with one hand so forcefully that my head touched the metal plate attached to the front of the tiger chair, while he lifted up my handcuffs as hard as he could with his other hand. The flesh on my wrists felt like it was being peeled away from my bones. I screamed in pain. At this time, the police officer who was interrogating me also came over, kicked my calf bone, and shouted, "Do you want to go home, or do

you want your God? You can only choose one. Now answer me!” I didn’t respond. They pressed my back forward as hard as possible and lifted up my handcuffs again four times, and only stopped when they saw I was starting to spasm. I felt dizzy, both of my hands were numb, I felt my chest begin to tighten, I was spasming all over my body, and I was starting to lose consciousness. I kept praying in my heart, asking God to keep me from betraying my brothers, sisters, and God. No matter how the police tortured me, I would stand firm and humiliate the great red dragon. The police continued to press me with the question, asking if I wanted to go home or if I wanted God. I said, “I will never leave God!” One of the officers was so angry that he glared at me and yelled, “You’re so stubborn you’ve lost your mind! You’re completely hopeless!” In the end, they couldn’t get anything out of me, so I was sent to the detention center, and then released after 15 days of detention. I knew that it was God’s protection and guidance that allowed me to stand firm this time.

After I returned home, the police monitored me more closely. The director of the village Women’s Federation often came to my house to ask about my situation. My family and neighbors also monitored me. The police came by my house almost every month to see if I still believed in God. I remember, in one month, the police visited me four times. In October of 2020, three representatives from the town government came and said, “We have been monitoring you for three years. Today, we’re here to ask you to write a letter promising that you don’t believe in God, a criticism and exposure letter, and a letter of disassociation from the church. Do that, and we will remove your name from the blacklist. We won’t monitor you anymore, you can live freely like a normal person, and your son’s future won’t be affected.” When I heard this, I was very angry. I thought, “You really are despicable! You try every means you can think of to make me

betray God, but you won't fool me!" I refused them on the spot. The district party committee secretary then said, "Then why don't we write it for you? You can just pretend to transcribe it, and we will take a picture of you to report the completion to our superiors. We don't want to keep coming here to bother you." His hypocritical words made me nauseous. I remembered that I had fallen for Satan's trick before to protect my own interests, and signed the "Three Letters" and betrayed God. The mark of that humiliation was deeply etched in my heart. I thought to myself, "Even if you monitor me for the rest of my life, even if you arrest me and sentence me, I will never betray God again." Finally, they saw that I was resolute, and left dejected.

After being arrested twice, although I was tortured and suffered a lot, I gained a lot. I saw that I was very selfish and despicable, and that I had no genuine faith in God. I also gained understanding of God's righteous disposition. God's righteous disposition is not only majestic and wrathful, but also full of great mercy and salvation for people. Throughout this journey, I experienced God's genuine love for me. For this, I am grateful to God from the bottom of my heart. No matter how difficult and arduous the road ahead may be, I will follow God to the end!

89. See My Parents for Who They Are

By Aliyah, South Korea

Since I was little, I always saw my parents as role models for believing in God. I had the impression that they were really ardent in their faith and willing to make sacrifices. Not long after accepting the work of Almighty God in the last days, my mom left a really good job to do her duty full time. She had some skills and knowledge and was willing to pay a price, so she always had important duties in the church. Our family was sold out by a Judas later on, so my parents went into hiding with me while I was still young in order to avoid arrest by the CCP. Even so, they kept doing their duties. Along with this, they led simple lives, and their general behavior appeared devout and spiritual, and I often heard church members say my parents had good humanity, that they were true believers, and that they were people who pursued the truth. I had to be separated from my parents when I was 10 because of the Party's oppression and although we had no way to see each other anymore, I always maintained this grand impression of them. I really looked up to and adored them and I felt like they had tremendous faith, that with all their sacrifices, they must pursue the truth and have good humanity, and God must approve of them. I even felt they were people who could be saved. I was really proud to have parents like that.

Later, all of us ended up fleeing abroad because of the Party's persecution. When I got in touch with them shortly after that, I saw that they were still doing duties abroad. Especially when I found out my mom had been a supervisor on quite a few projects, I looked up to her even more. My parents had been believers for so many years, had experienced so many things, and now they were carrying out such important duties. I felt certain that they were pursuers of the truth, that they had stature, so after this,

whenever I had any kind of state or difficulty I could go to them for help. It was great.

Later on, we would fellowship about each of our own recent states sometimes. Once, my dad said he was doing a task that, in his eyes, didn't require any technical skills, and that he was always hoping to switch to a different duty. It just so happened that I was living in the same state at this time, so we fellowshiped with each other and shared some of God's words to enter into together. Over time, by eating and drinking of God's words, I came to realize that I was being nitpicky about my duty, and that I was willing to perform duties that granted me access to name and benefits, but if I couldn't gain these things I was sloppy. I had been so selfish, contemptible, and lacking a sincere heart toward God. I came to hate and despise myself and I managed to get out of that state. But my dad remained stuck living in this state, and he just couldn't get motivated to do his duty. I was confused. Since he'd been a believer for over a decade, he should have some stature, so why couldn't he resolve this problem of being picky with his duty? I also realized that often when I talked to my parents about my difficulties and problems, although they'd send me some words of God and fellowship their view of things, what they said didn't actually resolve my problems. I started to get this vague sense that they didn't really understand the truth like I'd imagined. Later on, brothers and sisters were all writing experience essays to testify to God. I figured as long-time believers, my parents must have lots of experiences, especially my mom. She'd been oppressed by an antichrist and mistakenly expelled from the church, but she kept spreading the gospel to the best of her abilities. After being admitted back into the church, she put her all into whatever duty she had. She had also experienced being dismissed and reassigned several times, so she must have a wealth of experience. I figured she should write about these

experiences as soon as possible to testify to God. So I started urging my mom to write an essay as soon as she could, but she kept avoiding doing so, saying that she wanted to, but that she was too busy in her duty and couldn't calm herself to do so. I kept on pushing her, but she never wrote anything. Once, she told me that she wanted to write an essay, but that she couldn't organize her thoughts and didn't know where to start, so wanted to discuss it with me. I was so happy. I really wanted to hear about all her experiences over the years. But I was really surprised that after talking about the things that had happened to her and the corruption she'd shown, she didn't speak about any true understanding, but instead said lots of negative things, delimiting herself. Recalling some of her past experiences seemed really painful to her, as if she'd just submitted without a choice. I didn't hear her talk about anything real that she gained from it. I felt really put out after our talk. I'd thought that if she really had acquired understanding or gains, no matter how painful or negative the experience might have been at the time, so long as she ate and drank of God's words, sought the truth, came to understand God's will, and gained true knowledge of herself and of God, then eventually there would be some sentiment of sweetness and some enjoyment in the end. But in talking about her past experiences, she still seemed very pained and negative, and it seemed like her understanding of herself was deeply sentimental and impractical. Did this mean she lacked real experience? It suddenly dawned on me—no wonder she was so reluctant to write an essay testifying to God. Saying she didn't have time was just a cover. The core matter was that she hadn't attained the truth or made any real gains, so she couldn't write an experiential testimony. As for my dad, though he was willing to practice writing essays, his attempts were full of trivia, and there wasn't much about his true self-knowledge or what he'd gained from his experiences. It didn't seem to match up with his years

of faith. I remembered God saying: **“Whether you can be saved does not depend on how great your seniority or how many years you have been working, and much less does it depend on how many credentials you have built up. Rather, it depends on whether your pursuit has borne fruit. You ought to know that those who are saved are the ‘trees’ that bear fruit, not the trees with lush foliage and abundant flowers that yet yield no fruit. Even if you have spent many years wandering the streets, what does that matter? Where is your testimony?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Practice (7)). That was a wake-up call for me. It’s true. No matter how long a person has believed in God, how much work they have done, or how many things they have experienced, if they haven’t made any real gains from what they have gone through, and if they haven’t gained any truth and they are unable to bear testimony, that means they lack life. That kind of person can never be saved, even if they believe until the very end. When I realized this, I can’t describe the feeling I had. The image I had of my parents as people who “understood the truth” and “had stature” fell apart for the first time. I didn’t understand. After all those years of faith and all their sacrifices, why had they still not gained the truth? In private, I couldn’t help but break down in tears. Though I didn’t admire them as much after that, I still thought that no matter what, after all those years of sacrifice, this at the very least meant they had decent humanity and were true believers. If they could perform a duty well and start pursuing the truth now, they could still be saved. But then some things happened that changed my view of them again.

One day, I found out my dad had been dismissed because he was always perfunctory, avoiding difficult tasks, and wasn’t getting good results. Not long after that, I found my mom had also been dismissed for having poor humanity, not upholding the church’s interests, for having a

particularly arrogant disposition, and for not playing a positive role in her duty. At the time I was shocked and could hardly believe it, thinking to myself, “How could this happen? Isn’t not being able to do a duty basically tantamount to being exposed and cast out? Do they have poor humanity? Everyone who knew my parents before always said they had great humanity; otherwise, how could they have sacrificed so much?” I was really in turmoil, and all sorts of worries and apprehensions kept coming to the surface. I wondered how they were doing, if they were in pain or suffering. The more I thought about it, the more gloomy and depressed I felt. Though I knew the church must have arranged this based on principles, and that it was appropriate, I struggled to accept it, thinking to myself, “My parents have believed in God for so many years, they have been through so much, they have had to go into hiding because of the CCP’s persecution, and ever since I was little, we’ve been apart longer than we’ve been together. I hoped so much that we’d be able to reunite in the kingdom after God’s work concludes. But now.... After going through so many years of hardship and doing so much work, how could they be dismissed so readily?” The more I thought about it, the more upset I became, unable to stop myself breaking down in tears once again. Over those few days, I couldn’t help but sigh and I had no motivation in my duty. Whenever I thought about the matter, I’d feel upset and all the strength would just leave my body. It was as if I’d suddenly lost all motivation for pursuit. I knew my state was wrong, and I kept telling myself rationally, “Mom and Dad’s dismissals must have been appropriate, God is righteous.” But I just couldn’t accept it in my heart and I couldn’t help but try to reason with God, thinking, “There are brothers and sisters who haven’t made any real contribution to the church’s work or done any significant duty, and they are still doing their duties, so why have my parents been dismissed? Whatever

issues they had, even if they hadn't achieved anything all those years, they still tried hard, so can't they get another chance, given all their suffering and the work they've done?" I knew this state of mine was wrong, but my heart remained unyielding, and I didn't have any motivation to seek the truth. So I came before God and prayed, "God, I am in so much pain. Please enlighten and guide me so that I may understand Your will."

I went on to ask a sister about how to resolve my state, and I couldn't help but cry as I explained it all to her. She fellowshiped with me, "Your parents were dismissed, but they weren't cleared out or expelled. Why are you so upset? You should see that God's love is within this. This is God giving them a chance to repent." My eyes finally opened when she said that. It was true. God has never said that a dismissal means a person has been exposed and cast out. A great deal of brothers and sisters only start to reflect, regret, truly repent and change after they've been dismissed. After that, they take on a duty in the church again. In any case, having a duty doesn't guarantee you can be saved. If you don't pursue the truth, you can still be cast out by God. In reality, being dismissed was God giving my parents a chance to reflect and repent, but I had thought being dismissed was the same as being exposed and cast out. This view isn't in line with the truth! When I thought about it this way, I felt a bit better, but I was still very upset about it whenever I thought about it later. I kept feeling like the church had been too hard on them.

Later, I read God's words: **"The more you lack understanding in a certain matter, the more you should have a God-fearing and pious heart, and frequently come before God to seek God's will and the truth. When you don't understand things, you need God's enlightenment and guidance. When you encounter things that you do not understand, you need to ask God to work more upon you. These are God's good**

intentions. The more you come before God, the closer your heart will be to God. And isn't it true that the closer your heart is to God, the more God will dwell within it? The more God is in a person's heart, the better their pursuit, the path they walk, and the state in their heart will become" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Treasuring God's Words

Is the Foundation of Belief in God). I felt a bit calmer after reading God's words. God says the less you understand something, the more you should seek the truth with a God-fearing heart. Only in this way can your state keep improving. Thinking on my parents' dismissals, I knew from doctrine that it had to be suitable for the church to do that and I shouldn't complain or make judgments, and I was trying not to dwell on it, but I still hadn't really resolved my misunderstandings or my distance from God. Whenever I thought about the matter, I still had this inexplicable sense of hurt and pain. At this point, I came to understand that when we encounter something we don't understand or comprehend, we need to actively seek the truth, not hold to rules and restrain ourselves, and let things pass in a haze—problems can't be solved that way. In reality, I didn't actually know my parents very well. I just saw them outwardly making sacrifices and expending themselves, and heard others say good things about them, but this was really narrow and one-sided. I should hear more about them from the brothers and sisters they'd been in contact with recently, not just rely on my own feelings. I started to look into the specifics of my parents' behaviors in their duties. I read their essays and others' evaluations of them. They said my dad was perfunctory in his duties and shirked anything difficult, and that he was unwilling to put much into anything that involved physical suffering, and that although he had skills, he'd always been passive in his duty without achieving much. He'd been dismissed and transferred several times, but he didn't do any of these duties he'd been transferred to well.

When he preached the gospel later, he was still perfunctory and shirked hard work. He didn't get anything done without the supervisor's oversight. When brothers and sisters pointed out problems in his duty, he didn't self-reflect, and always made excuses, saying he was getting older and had health problems, and that duty didn't play to his strengths, so it was normal that there were issues, and the others were expecting too much from him. As a result, he was dismissed when he never got good results in his duty. And though my mom seemed really energetic and could pay a price in her duty, she only did superficial work and was really just muddling through most of the time. She didn't do practical work, and delayed the work's progress. Though she did a lot of work, there were a lot of problems, which brought great losses to the interests of God's house. In addition to this, she was always covering her own back and protecting her own interests instead of those of the church. For example, some things needed to be handled promptly, and it would be best for her to go, but she'd send someone else, afraid of offending someone, holding up the work of the church. Brothers and sisters also said she had a really arrogant disposition and that she was obstinate. She used her experience as a crutch, doing whatever she wanted without discussing things with others. She was also incapable of accepting others' suggestions, possessive over her own work, and lacking in transparency, and brothers and sisters weren't sure of the specific details of how she did a lot of things. And the moment someone did something that wasn't in line with her wishes, her temper would flare up and she'd scold them angrily, causing them to feel constrained by her. One brother felt so constrained that he said to her, "Sister, I'm lacking caliber. Working with me must be such a pain for you, I'm sorry!" And some others said: "If it weren't for my duty, I'd never want to interact with someone like her." She was unwilling to accept it when others pointed out her problems. She was

also really biased and resistant to the sister who oversaw her work. She always thought it was always other people making life hard for her and that they were incapable of treating her fairly. I was shocked when I read these assessments. I just didn't want to believe my parents were actually like that.

Later on, I read this from God's words: **"Conscience and reason should both be components of a person's humanity. These are both the most fundamental and most important. What kind of person is one who lacks conscience and does not have the reason of normal humanity? Generally speaking, they are a person who lacks humanity, a person of extremely poor humanity. Going into more detail, what manifestations of lost humanity does this person exhibit? Have a go at analyzing what characteristics are found in such people and what specific manifestations they present. (They are selfish and mean.) Selfish and mean people are perfunctory in their actions and stand aloof from anything that does not concern them personally. They do not consider the interests of God's house, nor do they show consideration for God's will. They take on no burden of performing their duties or testifying for God, and they have no sense of responsibility"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One's Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). **"When a person has a good humanity, a true heart, conscience, and reason, these are not empty or vague things that cannot be seen or touched, but rather they are things that can be discovered anywhere in daily life; they are all things of reality. Say a person is great and perfect: Is that something you can see? You cannot see, touch, or even imagine what it is to be perfect or great. But if you say someone is selfish, can you see that person's acts—and does he correspond to the description? If someone is said to be honest with a true heart, can you see this behavior? If someone is said to be deceitful, crooked, and base, can you**

see those things? Even if you close your eyes, you can sense whether the person's humanity is normal or despicable through what they say and how they act. Therefore, 'good or bad humanity' is not an empty phrase. For example, selfishness and baseness, crookedness and deceit, arrogance and self-righteousness are all things that you can grasp in life when you come into contact with a person; these are the negative elements of humanity. Thus, can the positive elements of humanity that people should possess—such as honesty and a love of the truth—be perceived in everyday life? Whether someone has the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit; whether they can receive God's guidance; whether they have the work of the Holy Spirit—can you see all these things? Can you discern them all? What are the conditions that a person must be possessed of to gain the Holy Spirit's enlightenment, receive God's guidance, and act in accordance with the truth principles in all things? They must have an honest heart, love the truth, seek the truth in all things, and be able to practice the truth once they understand it. Having these conditions means having the Holy Spirit's enlightenment, being able to understand God's words, and being able to easily put the truth into practice. If someone isn't an honest person and doesn't love the truth in their heart, they will struggle to gain the Holy Spirit's work, and even if you fellowship the truth with them, nothing will come of it. How can you tell if someone is an honest person? You must not only look at whether they lie and cheat, but most important is to look at whether they are able to accept the truth and put it into practice. That is what's most key. God's house has always been casting out people, and at this point, many have already been cast out. They were not honest people, they were all deceitful people. They loved unrighteous things, they didn't love the truth at all. No matter how many years they

believed in God, they couldn't understand the truth or enter into reality. Even less were such people capable of genuine change. Therefore, their being cast out was an inevitability. When you come into contact with a person, what do you look at first? Look at their words and deeds to see if they are honest, if they love the truth, and if they can accept the truth. These are crucial. You can basically see a person's essence as long as you can determine whether they are an honest person, whether they are able to accept the truth and put it into practice. If a person's mouth is full of sweet-sounding words, but they do nothing real—when it comes time to do something real, they only think of themselves and never of others—then what kind of humanity is this? (Selfishness and baseness. He has no humanity.) Is it easy for a person without humanity to gain the truth? It is difficult for them. ... Pay no attention to what such people say; you must see what they live out, what they reveal, and what their attitude is when they perform their duties, as well as what their internal state is and what they love. If their love of their own fame and gain exceeds their loyalty to God, if their love of their own fame and gain exceeds the interests of God's house, or if their love of their own fame and gain exceeds the consideration they show for God, then are such people possessed of humanity? They are not people with humanity. Their behavior can be seen by others and by God. It is very difficult for such people to gain **the truth**" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One's Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). I saw from God's words that to evaluate whether someone's humanity is good or bad, we have to look at their attitude toward their duty and the truth. Those with good humanity love the truth and consider God's will in their duty. They treat their duty responsibly, are trustworthy, and protect the church's interests. Those with poor humanity

are really selfish and vile, and only think of their own interests. They muddle through their duty, they try to slack off, and are all talk, without getting real work done. They may even disregard or sell out the interests of the church for the sake of protecting their own interests. Looking at my parents' behavior in light of God's words, I saw they really weren't people with good humanity as I had thought they were. Just like my dad—though he made some superficial sacrifices, he didn't have a burden in his duty, instead being perfunctory and shirking hard work. When there was a price to pay, he'd find lots of excuses to care for his flesh, and not consider the church's needs. In his duty he needed constant oversight and urging on. He was really passive. As for my mom, though she was constantly busy, could suffer and pay a price for her duty, and it seemed she got some work done, there weren't any real results from her duties at all, and she did them just for show. She seemed incredibly busy and focused on efficiency, but she was really just looking for quick gains and it was all for her own name and status. She lacked a God-fearing heart in her work and this caused great losses to the interests of the church. In things involving the church's interests, she knew she was the best person for the job but insisted on others handling them. I saw that she didn't protect the church's interests in crucial matters at all, and that she wasn't of one heart with God. I just saw she'd completed a lot of tasks and paid a big price, but I wasn't looking at her motives in paying this price or whether she'd achieved anything in doing these tasks, if she'd really contributed anything to the church, or if she'd actually done more harm than good. I finally saw that evaluating whether someone's humanity is good or bad isn't about how many sacrifices or efforts they appear to have made, but it's more about whether their motives are correct, whether they're sincerely thinking of the church's work or doing things for their own name and status. People with truly good

humanity may not understand the truth, but their hearts are in the right place and they follow their conscience. They are of one heart with God's house and are able to protect the interests of the church when things happen, so they can attain good results. But as for those with poor humanity, no matter how much they appear to suffer and toil, or how well they speak, in reality, they're perfunctory in everything they do, only considering and planning for their own interests without sincerely thinking of the interests of the church at all, so they have lots of oversights in their work and don't really accomplish anything real. Maybe they can get some things done by temporarily relying on their gifts or experience, but in the long run, the losses involved in using this kind of person outweigh the gains because their humanity and character are substandard. They're unreliable and don't do real work. You never know when they might bring about losses to the church's work. When I realized that, I became totally convinced that my parents lacked good humanity.

I'd always thought about how much they gave up in their faith, including a really comfortable life, consistently doing their duty through nearly two decades of challenges, and that even if they didn't pursue the truth, they were at least true believers, and people with good humanity. But really, there are so many people who can make a show of withstanding hardship, but each person's motivations and essence in doing this can vary. I didn't see what was driving them to suffer and expend or whether they really achieved anything in their duties. I just looked at their surface-level sacrifices and efforts and thought they were true believers with good humanity. I was really superficial and foolish in my views! As believers all these years, though we've suffered persecution of the Communist Party and the pain of having our families torn apart, we've also enjoyed so much of God's grace. God not only bestows upon us so many truths, but He gives us

abundant sustenance for what we need in life. Someone who truly has conscience and reason should do their utmost to perform their duty and repay God's love. But after all those years of faith and understanding so much doctrine, my parents still didn't have the most basic sense of burden or responsibility toward their duties that they should have had. They didn't even protect the church's interests. Based on how they'd acted, the church dismissing them was entirely God's righteousness! Handling them in this way was not only good for the church's work, but it was also good for them. If stumbling and failing that way could help them reflect on and know themselves and turn toward God, change their attitude toward their duties, that would be salvation for them and a turning point in their path of faith. If they kept acting as they had been, without any self-reflection, repentance, or change whatsoever, they really could be exposed and cast out. I thought back on something God said: **"The amount an individual must suffer and the distance they must walk on their path is ordained by God, and no one can really help anyone else"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (6)). At this point, all I could do was point out the problems I saw and do my best to help them, but as for what path they chose, that wasn't something I should worry about. I felt much brighter in my heart when I understood these things, and I no longer felt upset or hurt on their behalf. I was able to approach the matter correctly.

I read more of God's words later: **"You must know what kind of people I desire; those who are impure are not permitted to enter into the kingdom, those who are impure are not permitted to besmirch the holy ground. Though you may have done much work, and worked for many years, in the end if you are still deplorably filthy, then it will be intolerable to the law of Heaven that you wish to enter My kingdom! From the foundation of the world until today, never have I offered easy**

access to My kingdom to those who curry favor with Me. This is a heavenly rule, and no one can break it!” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). **“I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). These passages were really moving for me. God’s only standard for judging whether people can be saved is if they possess the truth and have transformed their dispositions. God has worked all these years and expressed so many truths, giving such specific and detailed fellowship on the path of entering the truth reality and achieving salvation. So long as someone can love and accept the truth, there’s hope for attaining God’s salvation. But, if someone is satisfied with making superficial sacrifices even after years of faith, without practicing the truth or changing their corrupt disposition at all, then they don’t accept the truth, but they are sick of the truth. For someone like that, no matter how much they sacrifice or how many years they work, or how many important duties they have performed, if they haven’t gained the truth and life or had any change in their corrupt disposition in the end, and still resist and rebel against God, disturbing and disrupting the church’s work, they can’t be saved. Those who do lots of evil will be punished by God, and that’s determined by God’s righteous disposition. Thinking on that, I gained more clarity on how my parents had gotten to this point. Though they’d given up their home and jobs, and worked hard, they didn’t love the truth. They were perfunctory and willful in their duty, and didn’t reflect on or know themselves based on

God's words. When brothers and sisters pointed out their issues, they didn't submit, made excuses, thought the other person was trying to make life hard for them, and that others expected too much from them. This showed me that they were sick of the truth and didn't accept it, which is why their corrupt dispositions hadn't changed even after their many years of faith. Instead, as their time as believers and work record accrued, their arrogant disposition became increasingly severe. I could see from their attitude toward the truth that all their sacrifices weren't to gain the truth and life, but they were made reluctantly, for blessings. Just like Paul, everything he did was to make a deal with God. He wasn't a true believer who sincerely expended himself for God. It finally became clear to me that whether someone sincerely believes in God, has good humanity, and can be saved should be judged by their attitude toward the truth. It is not correct to judge them by the quantity of their superficial sacrifices, how much they've worked, or what kinds of duties they've done. Though some brothers and sisters may not make great contributions to the church, and their duties look insignificant, they're steadfast in their duties, they put all their heart and strength into them. Their focus in their duty is seeking the truth and reflecting on their corrupt disposition, and having come to recognize this, they can have personal regret and practice the truth, and make changes in their corrupt disposition. This sort of person can stand firm in God's house. The more I thought about this, the more I came to see that God is truly righteous. God's standard for evaluating people has never changed. It's just that I was thinking wishfully about salvation. I'd always thought God shouldn't forsake or cast out those who'd ostensibly made great sacrifices and worked hard, even if they hadn't contributed anything. But I really saw God's righteousness from my parents' case. God doesn't do things based on man's emotions or notions and imaginings, but He uses the standards of the

truth to judge and view each person. Even people who've held important roles in God's house are no exception. Realizing these things, my heart felt brighter and more free.

I read a couple more passages of God's words. God says: **"One day, when you understand some of the truth, you will no longer think that your mother is the best person, or that your parents are the best people. You will realize that they are also members of the corrupt human race, and that their corrupt dispositions are all the same. All that sets them apart is the physical blood relationship with you. If they don't believe in God, then they are the same as the unbelievers. You will no longer look at them from the perspective of a family member, or from the perspective of your fleshly relationship, but from the side of the truth. What are the main aspects you should look at? You should look at their views on belief in God, their views on the world, their views on handling matters, and most importantly, their attitudes toward God. If you assess these aspects accurately, you will be able to see clearly whether they are good or bad people. One day you may see clearly that they are people with corrupt dispositions just like you. It may be even clearer that they are not the kind-hearted people who have real love for you that you imagined them to be, nor are they able to lead you to the truth or onto the right path in life at all. You may see clearly that what they have done for you is of no great benefit to you, and that it is of no use to you in taking the right path in life. You may also find that many of their practices and opinions are contrary to the truth, that they are of the flesh, and that this makes you despise them, and feel aversion and hatred. If you come to see these things, you will then be able to treat your parents correctly in your heart, and you will no longer miss them, worry about them, or be unable to live apart from**

them. They have completed their mission as parents, so you will no longer treat them as the closest people to you or idolize them. Instead, you will treat them as ordinary people, and at that time, you will completely escape the bondage of emotions and truly emerge from your emotions and family affection” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Resolving One’s Corrupt Disposition Can Bring About True Transformation). **“Many people needlessly suffer emotionally; in fact, this is all unnecessary, useless suffering. Why do I say that? People are always constrained by their emotions, so they are unable to practice the truth and submit to God; in addition, being constrained by emotions is not at all beneficial to doing one’s duty or following God, and is moreover a huge obstacle to life entry. So, suffering the constraint of emotion has no meaning, and God does not remember it. So how do you free yourself from this meaningless suffering? You need to understand the truth, and see through to and understand the essence of these fleshly relationships; then it will be easy for you to be free of being constrained by the emotions of the flesh. ... Satan wants to use affection to constrain and bind people. If people do not understand the truth, it is easy for them to be deceived. Quite often, for their parents’ and loved ones’ sake, they are unhappy, they cry, they endure hardships, and they make sacrifices. This is their benighted ignorance; they take it on the chin, and they reap what they sow. Suffering these things is without value—a futile effort that God will not remember at all—and one might say they are going through hell. When you really understand the truth and see through to their essence, you will become free; you will feel that your previous suffering was ignorant and benighted. You will not blame anyone else; you will blame your own blindness, your foolishness, and the fact that you did not understand the truth or see matters clearly”**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Resolving One's Corrupt Disposition Can Bring About True Transformation). Reading God's words was really emotional for me. God understands us so well. All my tears and my needless suffering were because I was too emotional and didn't see things clearly. Before, I didn't understand the truth or have discernment over my parents, and just thought they were really great and admirable, that they were my role models, and that I should try to be like them. I even thought they were people who understood the truth and who were close to being saved, but when I looked at them in light of God's words and the truth, I finally realized how incredibly wrong my views had been and I finally gained some discernment of the sort of people they really were. I saw many things in them that I not only didn't admire, but I despised. I stopped adoring and looking up to them, and I stopped suffering and crying for them. I became able to see them objectively and accurately.

Through the exposure of this situation, I finally saw that I was too emotional. When I lived within fleshly affections, I was only thinking about how much my parents might be in pain and suffering, and I couldn't accept how the church had handled them. I was full of resistance, and even complained that God wasn't righteous. I now understand why God hates emotional ties between humans. It's because when people live in these emotions, they confuse right and wrong, good and evil, they become distant from God and they rebel against God. I didn't know myself before. When I saw brothers and sisters in tears for days over their relatives who had been dismissed, cleared out, or expelled, I looked down on them. I thought that if such a thing ever happened to me, I wouldn't be so weak. But when I actually faced that very thing, I was so much weaker than anyone else, and I fell apart. I didn't just cry a few times, but I lived in negativity and it impacted my duty. I was truly foolish and naive, and also somewhat

unreasonable. Through this experience, I finally gained some understanding for those brothers and sisters who struggled to escape their emotions, and I gained some shame for my past ignorance and boasting. I also learned that there's truth to seek in everything that happens, that there's always a chance to develop discernment and learn a lesson, and that we need to treat everyone around us, even our own parents, in accordance with God's words and the truth. Then we won't treat them according to our emotions and imaginings, or do things to resist God. Thank God!

90. Your Duty Is Not Your Career

By Kylie, France

Last year, I was responsible for the work of two churches. Sometimes people needed to be transferred from our churches to do a duty somewhere else. At first I was happy to cooperate and would provide people right away. But after a while I realized it was harder to get my work done when good people were being transferred out. I worried my performance might suffer, and the leaders would dismiss me for not getting results in my work, and my dignity and status would be in danger. Later, I wasn't quite as ready and willing to provide people.

Not long ago, I'd noticed that a new believer, Sister Ranna, had good caliber and was eager in her pursuit. She often read God's words and watched church videos, and would always ask me questions about practicing the truth and entering the truth reality. I thought about how our church needed a waterer, and I should foster her for that right away. In this way, not only would I be watering new believers, it would also show I was getting results in my duty, and the leaders would see I was really capable—it would be a win-win. For this reason, I provided her with lots of help so she'd understand more truths and be able to take on the watering work. Little did I expect that one day a leader told me another church needed someone to take on their watering work, and wanted Sister Ranna to take on that duty there. When I heard this, I was furious and felt really resistant to it, thinking that church wasn't the only one in need of people. A few days later the leader once again brought up the idea of transferring Sister Ranna, saying she had good caliber and maybe could be trained for more responsibility. I grew more resistant the more I heard, and I thought, "You want to take her just like that? If our church's work continues to suffer, I'll

be dismissed.” Upon realizing this, I lashed out, saying, “I was thinking she could stay here and be cultivated for a leadership position.” Actually, I knew there were quite a few newcomers in the other church and they had more of a need for watering. I didn’t dare say outright I wouldn’t let her go, but I was full of pent-up anger and felt awful, and I just couldn’t accept it. The leader had transferred two group leaders out of our churches not long before that, so I had been constantly cultivating new people and filling vacancies, and, most importantly, good candidates were not so easy to find. If I didn’t get good results in my work, I’d never get a chance to stand out, to show what I could do. I felt like I just couldn’t do that duty, and I grew more and more miserable. I felt so wronged, and I couldn’t hold back my tears. Seeing me like that, the leader fellowshiped with me on God’s will and the principles of the church for arranging duties, but it just went in one ear and out the other. Later, she said that by acting like that, I was impeding the work of the church, but I couldn’t accept that at all. I thought, “But isn’t this out of consideration for our church’s work? If you think I’m standing in the way, then you do it. Just dismiss me, so that I won’t cause any more problems.” I felt bad when I thought about it that way, so I prayed to God, saying, “God, I just can’t submit to what’s happening now. I feel so wronged. God, please guide me so I can understand what’s wrong with me.”

After the prayer, I reflected on why, when the leader needed to make normal changes, other people were fine with it, but I had a problem. I just had to fight it and hold it back, I had so much internal resistance to it. And it wasn’t just once or twice that I acted that way. Why was it so hard for me to submit? Then I remembered these words from God: **“A duty is not your own operation, your own career, or your own work; it is God’s work. God’s work requires your cooperation, which gives rise to your duty. The part of God’s work with which man must cooperate is his duty.**

The duty is a portion of God's work—it is not your career, not your domestic affairs nor your personal affairs in life. Whether your duty is to deal with external or internal affairs, whether it involves mental or physical labor, this is the duty that you ought to perform, it is the work of the church, it forms one part of God's management plan, and it is the commission God has given to you. It is not your personal business. So then, how should you treat your duty? At the very least, you must not perform your duty whichever way you please, you must not act recklessly” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Seeking the Truth Principles Can One Perform One's Duty Well). **“Just what is duty? It is a commission entrusted by God to people, it is part of the work of God's house, and it is a responsibility and obligation that should be borne by every one of God's chosen people. Is duty your career? Is it a personal family matter? Is it fair to say that once you have been given a duty, this duty becomes your personal business? That is absolutely not the case. So how should you fulfill your duty? By acting in accordance with God's requirements, words, and standards, and by basing your behavior on the truth principles rather than on human subjective desires. Some people say, ‘Once a duty has been given to me, is it not my own business? My duty is my charge, and is what I am charged with not my own business? If I handle my duty as my own business, doesn't that mean I will do it properly? Would I do it well if I didn't treat it like my own business?’ Are these words right or wrong? They are wrong; they are at odds with the truth. Duty is not your own personal business, it is God's business, it is part of God's work, and you must do as God asks; only by performing your duty with a God-obeying heart can you be up to standard. If you always perform your duty according to your own notions and imaginings, and according to**

your own inclinations, then you will never meet the standard. Only ever performing your duty as you wish is not performing your duty, because what you are doing is not within the scope of God's management, it is not the work of the house of God; you are, instead, running your own operation, carrying out your own tasks, and so this is not remembered by God" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Seeking the Truth Principles Can One Perform One's Duty Well). I thought over God's words and realized that a duty isn't a career, and that it's God's commission to people. So it should be carried out according to the requirements of God. I shouldn't just do whatever I want, based on my personal wishes and plans. If I did so, it may have seemed like I was doing a lot of work, but that wouldn't have been doing a duty; it would have been running my own enterprise, and resisting God. Thinking back on my behavior, whenever I had been asked to provide people, I was worried that if I let go of the church members who were most effective at fulfilling their duties, then our churches wouldn't get good results, and I could lose my position. In order to protect my reputation and status, I didn't want to provide people. I knew in theory that my duty had been given to me by God, and this was my responsibility, but in practice, I treated it like my own business, my own job. Since I'd been given that job, I figured it was my business, so I had the final say. I was willing to help provide people only if it didn't impact the results of my work, but the moment it did, I would definitely dig my heels in and not let anyone go. So when I found out Sister Ranna was going to be transferred, I was heartbroken and didn't want to let her leave. I felt incredibly wronged, and even wanted to throw a fit, to stop doing my duty. How was that doing a duty? I was clearly disrupting and hindering the work of the church. I didn't consider the big picture while fulfilling my duty, nor was I upholding the interests of the church, instead I was scheming for

myself, using my duty as a chance to work for my own reputation and status. Was I not running my own operation? No matter how much work I might do, God would never commemorate such behavior. I should cooperate enthusiastically whenever a church needed someone. I couldn't just think of my personal interests.

In a gathering the next day, a leader mentioned that it's the job of church leaders to water brothers and sisters while also cultivating people so that everyone can do a duty that suits them. Upon hearing that, it was like I had awoken from a dream. She was right. Watering the brothers and sisters and helping find them the right duty was part of my job. But when another church needed someone, on the surface I didn't dare refuse, yet in my heart I was fighting it, coming up with all sorts of excuses not to transfer them. That wasn't doing my duty. I wasn't fulfilling my responsibilities in that role, and even blamed the leader for putting me in a tough position. Nor did I reflect on myself, and instead just stood in the way of the church's work. Was that kind of behavior not intentionally getting in the way of things, just like that sister had said? I remembered when I first took on the duty, I just wanted to do my humble part for the gospel work. But now I'd become an obstacle, a stumbling block. At this I felt some regret, and told myself that next time I must practice the truth, that I couldn't just care about myself in such a selfish and despicable way.

A few days later, the leader sent a message asking me to transfer a couple of team members to another church. I was completely calm when I read that message, and saw that this circumstance came to me as a chance for me to practice the truth. But when I was evaluating team members, I did feel some hesitance, and wondered if I really had to let the two best sisters on the team go, or perhaps I could transfer two who weren't quite as good. At that thought, I realized I was being selfish and making the same mistake

again. Then I read a passage of God's words: **"The hearts of people who are deceitful and evil brim with their personal ambitions, plans, and schemes. Are these things easy to put aside? (No.) What should you do if you still wish to perform your duty properly but cannot put these things aside? There is a path here: The nature of what you are doing must be clear to you. If something concerns the interests of God's house, and it is of great importance, then you must not put it off, make mistakes, harm the interests of the house of God, or disturb the work of God's house. This is the principle you should follow in performing your duty. If you want to avoid harming the interests of God's house, you must first put aside your ambitions and desires; your interests must be compromised somewhat, they must be put aside, and you'd sooner suffer a little hardship than offend God's disposition, which would be a red line. If you foul up the work of the church in order to satisfy your pathetic ambitions and vanity, what will be the ultimate consequence for you? You will be replaced, and may be cast out. You will have provoked God's disposition, and may not have any more chances to be saved. There is a limit to the number of chances that God gives people. How many chances do people get to be tested by God? This is determined according to their essence. If you make the most of the opportunities you are given, if you can let go of your own pride and vanity, and prioritize doing the church's work well, then you have the right mindset"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Seeking the Truth Principles Can One Perform One's Duty Well). Upon reading this I realized that, at the bare minimum, I could not affect or hold back the work of the church, even if my personal dignity and benefit suffered. Previously, I'd always been worried that if the best church members were transferred out, our churches' work would suffer, and I'd be dismissed. But who would be

dismissed for upholding the interests of the church and caring for God's will? No one. On the other hand, someone who's selfish and despicable, who refuses to let go of good church members, impacting the work of the church and its interests would be the one to be dismissed and cast out. And even if I did hold on to those sisters, that doesn't mean our churches would necessarily do well. If my motives were wrong, and I were protecting my own name and position, then I wouldn't gain the work of the Holy Spirit, so how could I get good results in my duty without God's guidance? These thoughts put my mind at ease somewhat, and I said to God in my heart, "God, I want to practice the truth and satisfy You, and to stop protecting my name and status." After that, I offered the two team members with the best performance to the other church. Once I put this into practice, I felt really at peace. It felt good to be that kind of person.

After that experience I thought I'd changed a bit, but to my surprise, not much later I was completely laid bare again. One day, a leader said that she wanted me to provide a few more watering personnel, because we had quite a few bilingual newcomers at our churches. If that were the case, then I'd have to give up nearly everyone who was bilingual and had good caliber. At this point, I started to worry about my dignity and position again. If those people left, I feared that our churches' gospel work could definitely be impacted. That evening, the leader sent me a message checking in on the situation. I felt a lot of resistance inside me. For every name she brought up, I just gave one-word answers: "Sure," "Fine." When she asked for details, I didn't want to say anything. I thought, "I never wanted to give up these people to begin with, but you keep asking questions. You're bleeding our churches dry of people who can do a duty. How am I supposed to do my job?" I was really resistant and couldn't submit.

Later, in a gathering, I saw a video of a recital of God's words that helped me understand my corruption. Almighty God says: **"The essence of the antichrists' selfishness and vileness is obvious; their manifestations of this kind are particularly prominent. The church entrusts them with a piece of work, and if it brings renown and benefits, and lets them show their face, they are very interested, and willing to accept it. If it is work that is thankless or involves offending people, or won't allow them to show their face or it is of no benefit to their status or reputation, they have no interest, and will not accept it, as if this work has nothing to do with them, and is not the work they ought to be doing. When they encounter difficulties, there is no chance that they will seek the truth to solve them, much less try to see the bigger picture and give any consideration to the work of the church. For example, within the scope of the work of God's house, based on overall work needs, there may be some personnel transfers. If a few people are transferred from a church, what would be the sensible way for that church's leaders to treat the issue? What is the problem if they are concerned only with their own church's interests, rather than the overall interests, and if they are absolutely unwilling to transfer people? Why, as a church leader, are they unable to submit to the overall arrangements of God's house? Is such a person considerate of God's will? Are they attentive to the work's big picture? If they do not think of the work of God's house as a whole, but only of their own church's interests, are they not very selfish and contemptible? Church leaders should unconditionally submit to the sovereignty and arrangements of God, and to the centralized arrangements and coordination of God's house. This is what accords with the truth principles. When required by the work of God's house, no matter who**

they are, everyone should submit to the coordination and arrangements of God's house, and absolutely should not be controlled by any individual leader or worker as if they belong to them or are subject to their decisions. The obedience of God's chosen ones to the centralized arrangements of the house of God is perfectly natural and justified, and may not be defied by anyone. Unless an individual leader or worker makes an irrational transference that is not in accordance with principle—in which case this may be disobeyed—all of God's chosen ones should obey, and no leader or worker has the right or any reason to try to control anyone. Would you say there is any work that is not the work of the house of God? Is there any work that does not involve the expansion of God's kingdom gospel? It is all the work of God's house, each work is equal, and there is no 'yours' and 'mine.' ... God's chosen ones should be centrally allocated by the house of God. This has nothing to do with any leader, team head, or individual. Everyone must act according to principle; this is the rule of God's house. When antichrists do not act according to the principles of God's house, when they constantly scheme for the sake of their own status and interests, and make brothers and sisters of good caliber serve them in order to consolidate their power and status, is this not selfish and vile? Outwardly, keeping people of good caliber by their side and not allowing them to be transferred by the house of God appears as if they are thinking of church work, but in fact they are only thinking of their own power and status, and not about the work of the church at all. They are afraid that they will do the church work poorly, be replaced, and lose their status. When antichrists give no thought to the wider work of God's house, think only of their own status, protect their own status with no compunction for the cost to the interests of the house of

God, and defend their own status and interests to the detriment of the church's work, this is selfish and vile. When faced with such a situation, at the very least one must think with their conscience: 'These people are all of the house of God, they are not my personal property. I, too, am a member of the house of God. What right do I have to stop the house of God from transferring people? I should consider the overall interests of the house of God, instead of just concentrating on the work within the scope of my own responsibilities.' Such are the thoughts that should be found in people who are possessed of conscience and sense, and the sense that should be possessed by those who believe in God. God's house engages in the work of the whole and the churches are engaged in the work of parts. Therefore, when God's house has an especial need from the church, what's most important for leaders and workers is to obey the arrangements of God's house. False leaders and antichrists are not possessed of such conscience and sense. They are all selfish, they only think of themselves, and they do not think of the work of the church. They only consider the benefits before their very eyes, they do not consider the wider work of God's house, and so they are absolutely incapable of obeying the arrangements of God's house. They are extremely selfish and vile! In the house of God, they are even bold enough to be obstructive, and even dare to dig their heels in; these are the people most lacking in humanity, they are evil people. That is the kind of people the antichrists are. They always treat the church's work, and the brothers and sisters, and even all the assets of God's house that fall within their scope of responsibility, as their own private property. It is up to them how these things are distributed, transferred, and used, and the house of God is not allowed to interfere. Once they are in their hands, it is as if they are in the possession of Satan, no one is allowed to

touch them. They're the big shots, the head honchos, and whoever goes to their territory has to obey their orders and arrangements, and take their cue from them. This is the manifestation of the selfishness and vileness within the antichrist's character" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists.

Excursus Four: Summarizing the Character of Antichrists and the Essence of Their Disposition (Part One)). God's words revealed my own state. My wanting to keep the brothers and sisters under my control and not hand them over to other churches was selfish and despicable, and I was exhibiting an antichrist's disposition. Throughout that time, I felt really resistant and unwilling whenever the leader wanted to transfer someone from our churches. I even lashed out, threw fits, and felt so wronged it drove me to tears. I didn't agree to it until the leader fellowshiped to help me change my thinking, and said some nice things to me. I was like the head honcho God laid bare, wanting to have say over transfers from the churches I was responsible for. When people were needed, they could go if I said so, but without my permission no one could touch them. No one could proceed without a nod from me. I was keeping the churches firmly within my control, keeping everything under my command. Christ wasn't in charge of the churches—I was. It was as if the newcomers who had been cultivated belonged to me. I wanted to use what they achieved in their duty to consolidate my own position. That was so shameless of me! Was I not on an antichrist's path opposed to God? This situation also made me think of the pastors and elders in the religious world. They know that The Church of Almighty God bears witness that the Lord has returned and expressed many truths, but they fear their congregations will follow Almighty God once they see these truths, and they'll lose their status, reputation, and livelihood, so they do everything within their power to keep the believers from the true way. They outright claim that the sheep are theirs and won't let them hear God's voice and

follow Him. They treat believers like their private property, tightly controlling them and fighting God for them. Those pastors and elders are the evil servants, the antichrists exposed in the last days. How were my actions any different in their essence from those pastors and elders? I was controlling others to protect my dignity and position. I knew if I didn't repent, I'd end up damned and punished by God along with the antichrists. God's chosen people belong to God, not to any human being. Anyone who's needed for a duty in other churches can be transferred as needed. I had no right to keep anyone in the churches I was managing. When leaders are arranging work and transferring people, it's out of respect that they ask for my input, as well as for smoother cooperation. In fact, even directly transferring someone without my consent would be justifiable. I had no right to keep people under my control. I knew I couldn't keep living so selfishly. God had given me my breath, so why was I fighting for myself? I may not be able to make a great contribution to the church, but at the very least I shouldn't interfere. I had to do more to benefit the work of the church. After that, whenever necessary, I proactively helped out with transfers, and stopped thinking about my own name and position.

Later, a sister I'd transferred to another church sent me a message, saying she and other brothers and sisters had gotten so much out of their work in spreading the gospel there. I felt both overjoyed and ashamed. Why I felt overjoyed was that they could do their part in spreading the kingdom gospel. But what made me feel ashamed was that, if I had willingly provided people without standing in the way, then they could have been trained earlier. So I prayed to God, not wanting to live by my corrupt disposition anymore, but instead to provide good candidates, do my part for the gospel work, and fulfill my duty.

91. The Truth Behind Carelessness

By Victor, South Korea

Last October we finished producing a video. We put a lot of work into it, and devoted lots of time and energy, but surprisingly, when the leader was examining it, he pointed out problems with many details. He said this video wasn't done well, that it wasn't an improvement on the previous videos, and that it had to be redone. Upon hearing this, I was taken aback. I'd never imagined there would be such major issues. Wouldn't that mean that all our effort and resources had been for nothing? It seemed like a huge waste.

I was somewhat at a loss. I didn't know how to get through that situation, or what lesson I needed to learn. I was thinking that the video had gone through several rounds of editing, during which time the leader had watched it, but never mentioned those issues. I felt that I lacked caliber, so it was normal for me to overlook such problems. But I kept thinking about it, and something about it felt off. Were such major problems only because I lacked caliber? I was doing so poorly in my duty; what was the cause of this problem? Then I remembered something the leader had said before, that he'd just checked the video for its concepts and continuity, but that didn't mean there weren't issues. He'd told us to think it over in detail, check it thoroughly, and fix any problems we found. But that's not what I did. I figured that since the leader had seen the video, it should be fine, so during production I didn't carefully review it or give it much thought. My attitude was completely careless and perfunctory. Then when problems cropped up, I said the leader had already reviewed it. Wasn't I fobbing off responsibility? That was so unreasonable of me. Then I thought that there

was definitely a lesson in that for me, so I prayed and sought, asking God to guide me in knowing myself.

A few days later, the sister I worked with asked me to review a completed video with her. I spoke up about some problems I had noticed in my review, but she said that the leader had watched it, and he mentioned that he liked the concept, and that we should finish it right away. I had some suggestions for revising it, but didn't dare mention them after hearing that the leader had watched it and said he liked it. I was afraid that my judgment was off, and we made some changes that turned out to be wrong. Then I'd just be getting in the way. But I saw there really were some issues in the video, so I asked another brother to watch it, and he agreed with how I felt. I thought that I should bring it up again. But then I thought, if we revised it and the edits I suggested were problematic, then when the leader asked who had done it, wouldn't it be my responsibility? Wouldn't I be dealt with? If we went ahead and asked the leader, and he said it was fine, it wouldn't need any more editing. That would save trouble, and we wouldn't have to dwell on it. So I suggested to the sister I was partnered with that we ask the leader, so we could put our minds at ease. But as soon as those words left my mouth, I felt like something wasn't right. This situation was so familiar to me, namely I only ever had one response to hearing a different opinion: ask the leader and get him to decide. If the leader gave his approval, then we wouldn't need to worry about it and we could move on; otherwise, if he said there were problems, then we made edits. That was what we did every time. In fact, it wasn't that we were unfamiliar with the principles and requirements for videos. We could seek the truth and act on the principles for those sorts of problems, and the leader had been clear that his review was just a broader look at the video, while we needed to check for and fix any smaller issues. That was the responsibility I should fulfill, and it was

my job. So why wasn't I putting my heart into it at all? In the face of issues or differences of opinion, I wasn't seeking the principles with brothers and sisters to reach a consensus and being responsible, instead I was handing it off to the leader, and not doing my duty. Then I remembered some of God's words: **"Some people are always very passive in their duties, always sitting and waiting and relying on others. What sort of attitude is that? It is irresponsibility. ... You only talk about words and doctrines, and you only say pleasant-sounding things, but you do not do any practical work. If you do not wish to perform your duty, you should resign. Do not hold your position and not do anything there. Is doing so not inflicting harm on God's chosen people and compromising the work of the church? In the way you talk, you seem to understand all manner of doctrine, but when asked to perform a duty, you are careless and perfunctory, and not conscientious in the least. Is that expending yourself sincerely for God? You are not sincere when it comes to God, yet you feign sincerity. Are you capable of deceiving Him? In the way you usually talk, there seems to be such great faith; you would like to be the pillar of the church and its rock. But when you perform a duty, you are less useful than a matchstick. Is this not deceiving God with your eyes wide open? Do you know what will come of you trying to deceive God? He will detest and reject you and cast you out! All people are revealed in performing their duties—just set a person to a duty, and it will not take long before it is revealed whether they are an honest person or a deceitful person, and whether or not they are a lover of the truth. Those who love the truth can perform their duties sincerely and uphold the work of God's house; those who do not love the truth do not uphold the work of God's house in the least, and they are irresponsible in performing their duties. This is immediately clear to those who are**

clear-sighted. No one who performs their duty poorly is a lover of the truth or an honest person; such people will all be revealed and cast out”

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). God says we must have responsibility in our duty and do practical work. That’s the only way to do our duty well. If we don’t put our heart into our duty, and instead just muddle through it, without being serious about problems or taking responsibility, always wanting to push it off on someone else, and doing only superficial work, then we can’t do our duty well, and God will be dissatisfied. In God’s eyes, such people are useless, and not worthy of fulfilling a duty. I saw I was just like what God exposed. When I ran into problems in my duty, if I put my heart into it, praying, seeking and fellowshiping on principles with the other brothers and sisters, then we’d reach a consensus and find a solution. But I thought that was a hassle, and didn’t want to make the effort. So I wanted to go straight to the leader, thinking that it would be less of a hassle if he just called the shots. That would save so much trouble. Otherwise, we’d just be there yammering away for ages, and still might not find an answer. So I handed plenty of problems over to the leader. As the team leader, I wasn’t taking on my responsibilities or paying the price I should have. In addition, in our work discussions, sometimes I spotted issues or had some of the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment, but once I explained it, if a brother or sister expressed a different opinion, then I would just clam up. I was afraid the others would say I was arrogant, and even more frightening to me was that if there were problems, then I’d have to take responsibility. I just felt like, since I’d shared my opinion, it was up to them to consider it, and if we couldn’t reach a consensus, then we could ask the leader. That way, if a problem cropped up, at least it wouldn’t all come back on me. I wasn’t seeking how to act according to truth principles, much less was I thinking

of what would benefit the church. I didn't want to pay the slightest price, and was being irresponsible. On the surface I was detecting and raising issues, but I wasn't resolving them. I was always letting others have the final say, and I wouldn't make decisions. Wasn't I playing tricks, being selfish and despicable? I wasn't upholding the interests of the church. Previously, whenever we encountered a problem, I would always ask the leader, thinking that it was reasonable to ask when I didn't understand, rather than blindly trusting myself. With the revelation of God's words, I could see I was being irresponsible, careless in my duty, and not devoted. Now that I've realized that, I saw that I'd been really obtuse and numb. In the face of these situations, I never sought the truth or learned a lesson. I was always just skating by in my duty, not taking it responsibly. That was such a dangerous way to do my duty. Now I found problems and my partner had different ideas. If I didn't seek truth principles with her to reach agreement or seek a solution, but just ran to ask the leader, that was clearly muddling through. I realized that I had to change my state, that if I kept taking the middle road and being irresponsible, I was knowingly committing an error. So I suggested to my partner that we create another version and compare the two, then ask the leader to review the one that we think is better. She expressed her agreement at this arrangement. After putting it into practice, I really felt at ease.

Later I read this passage of God's words: **"Is someone who fears taking on responsibility in performing their duty cowardly, or is there a problem with their disposition? You must be able to tell the difference. The fact is that this is not an issue of cowardice. If that person were after wealth, or they were doing something in their own interest, how could they be so brave? They would take on any risk. But when they do things for the church, for God's house, they take on no risk at all. Such**

people are selfish and vile, the most treacherous of all. Anyone who does not take on responsibility in performing a duty is not the least bit sincere to God, to say nothing of their loyalty. What sort of person dares to take on responsibility? What sort of person has the courage to bear a heavy burden? Someone who takes the lead and goes bravely forth at the most crucial moment in the work of God's house, who is not afraid to bear a heavy responsibility and endure great hardship when they see the work that is most important and crucial. That is someone loyal to God, a good soldier of Christ. Is it the case that everyone who fears taking on responsibility in their duty does so because they do not understand the truth? No; it is a problem in their humanity. They have no sense of justice or responsibility, they are selfish and vile people, not true-hearted believers in God, and they do not accept the truth in the least. For this reason, they cannot be saved. Believers in God must pay a great price in order to gain the truth, and they will encounter many obstacles to practicing it. They must forsake things, abandon their fleshly interests, and endure some suffering. Only then will they be able to put the truth into practice. So, can one who fears taking on responsibility practice the truth? They certainly cannot practice the truth, let alone gain it. They are afraid of practicing the truth, of incurring a loss to their interests; they are afraid of being humiliated, of disparagement, and of judgment, and they do not dare to practice the truth. Consequently, they cannot gain it, and no matter how many years they believe in God, they cannot attain His salvation. Those who can perform a duty in God's house must be people whose burden is the work of the church, who take responsibility, who uphold the truth principles, and who can suffer and pay the price. If one is lacking in these areas, they are unfit to perform a duty, and they do not

possess the conditions for the performance of duty. There are many people who are afraid of taking on responsibility in performing a duty. Their fear manifests in three main ways. The first is that they choose duties that do not require taking on responsibility. If a church leader arranges for them to perform a duty, they first ask whether they must take on responsibility for it: If so, they do not accept it. If it does not require them to take on responsibility and to be responsible for it, they accept it reluctantly, but still must see whether the work is tiring or bothersome, and despite their reluctant acceptance of the duty, they are unmotivated to perform it well, preferring still to be careless and perfunctory. Leisure, no labor, and no bodily hardship—this is their principle. The second is that when a difficulty befalls them or they encounter a problem, their first resort is to report it to a leader and have the leader handle and resolve it, in hope that they may keep their ease. They do not care how the leader handles the issue and pay this no mind—so long as they are not responsible themselves, then all is well to them. Is such performance of duty loyal to God? This is called passing the buck, dereliction of duty, playing tricks. It is all talk; they are not doing anything real. They say to themselves, ‘If this thing is mine to sort out, what if I end up making a mistake? When they look into who’s to blame, won’t they handle me? Won’t the responsibility for it fall first to me?’ This is what they worry about. But do you believe that God scrutinizes all? Everyone makes mistakes. If a person whose intention is correct lacks experience and has not handled some sort of matter before, but they have done their best, that is visible to God. You must believe that God scrutinizes all things and the heart of man. If one does not even believe this, are they not a nonbeliever? What significance could there be in such a person performing a duty? ... There is one

more way in which a person's fear of taking on responsibility manifests. When they perform their duty, some people do just a bit of superficial, simple work, work that does not entail taking on responsibility. Work that entails difficulties and taking on responsibility, they dump onto others, and if something should go wrong, they shift the blame onto those people and keep their own noses clean. ... If they have no sense of responsibility in performing their duty, how can they perform their duty well? Those who don't genuinely expend themselves for God can't perform any duty well, and those who fear taking responsibility will only delay things when they perform their duties. Such people are not trustworthy or dependable; they only perform their duty to get food in their mouths" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). God's word really struck a chord in me, and I felt like this was God describing my exact state at that time. In doing the work entrusted by the church, I wasn't working on truth principles or leaning on God to do my best. Instead, I was escaping problems and shirking responsibility, putting things on the leader's shoulders so he could handle them. I'd do whatever the leader said, thinking that if in the end it wasn't done well, I wouldn't be responsible for it, and I wouldn't be dealt with. Was that not playing tricks? I even believed that this was a clever way to do things. But in God's words, I saw that was divesting myself of responsibility, neglecting my duty, and being crafty. I was being cunning and deceitful toward God in my duty. I always left an out for myself, so I could avoid responsibility. I wasn't being genuine or paying a true price, nor was I trying to do everything I possibly could. I was just skating by and being dishonest, and even if I was doing service, I was not devoted. I wasn't worthy of a duty. I realized that, whenever we had finished making a video, as long as the leader said it was

okay in the preliminary review, I didn't seriously review it or really think it over. Even if others made suggestions during the production process, I didn't pay much mind to them. I'd just give it a quick look and say it was fine. I was really irresponsible. As a result, some of the finished videos had problems and had to come back for revisions. Sometimes the team didn't reach a consensus on a video, while I saw the problem, yet didn't say anything decisive, instead I just brought it to the leader for him to make the call. Sometimes we really didn't have a grasp on the principles of a problem, couldn't ensure things were done up to standard, and needed the leader's guidance to help us correct the errors. But some of the problems were clearly within our grasp, yet I just found a loophole, not doing something I was capable of. I didn't pay the price or give the thought to it that I should have, and instead just took the easy way out. I wasn't seeking truth principles or really considering issues I saw. Nor was I trying to summarize or learn lessons from deviations and failures. It became a habit to do things this way. I was even thinking that everyone made mistakes in their duty, so if I did overlook some problems, it was because I lacked caliber. Putting aside whether I could see problems or not, I didn't even feel the sense of responsibility that I should have. In order to protect myself, I was being careless and irresponsible in performing my duty, and I even placed responsibility on the leader when problems cropped up. I was twisting the truth, making everything someone else's problem. Now I saw that it wasn't a matter of caliber, but a problem with my humanity.

Then I read another passage of God's words: **"If you protect yourself whenever something befalls you and leave yourself an escape route, a back door, are you putting the truth into practice? This is not practicing the truth—it is being sneaky. You are performing your duty in the house of God now. What is the first principle of performing a**

duty? It is that you must first perform that duty with your whole heart, sparing no effort, and protect the interests of God's house. This is a truth principle, one that you should put into practice. Protecting oneself by leaving oneself an escape route, a back door, is the principle of practice followed by unbelievers, and their most elevated philosophy. Considering oneself first in all things and placing one's own interests before all else, not thinking of others, having no connection with the interests of God's house and the interests of others, thinking of one's own interests first and then thinking of an escape route—is that not what an unbeliever is? This is precisely what an unbeliever is. This sort of person is not fit to perform a duty” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)).

God's words were really poignant for me. I'd never imagined that the perspective with which I performed my duty was that of an unbeliever. When facing problems, I'd always considered my own interests first, afraid that any problems would just come back on me. So I appeared to be carrying out my duty, but in fact I never put my all into it, sought the truth, or acted according to the principles, nor did I consider the interests of the church. In addition, I was happy to just do some labor in my duty, going through the motions every day. Was that not just like an unbeliever working for a boss? When my partner and I had different opinions, why did I want to leave it to the leader to decide? It was a matter of not wanting to take responsibility. So even though I clearly spotted some real issues, I left them to the leader to decide, and I even felt like that was alright. I saw not taking responsibility had become a natural revelation of my nature. I was really cunning and selfish, and totally unreliable. I was playing games, being crafty, and lacked any semblance of genuineness. People like that really aren't worthy of fulfilling a duty. God's words say: **“Some people don't**

take any responsibility when they perform their duty, they are always careless and perfunctory. Although they can see the problem, they are unwilling to seek a resolution and are scared of offending people, and so they just rush through things, with the result that the work has to be redone. Since you are performing this duty, you should take responsibility for it. Why do you not take it seriously? Why are you perfunctory and careless? And are you remiss in your responsibilities when you perform your duty in this way? No matter who takes primary responsibility, everyone else is responsible for keeping an eye on things, everyone must have this burden and this sense of responsibility—but none of you pay any attention, you really are perfunctory, you have no loyalty, you are remiss in your duties! It's not that you can't see the problem, but that you are not willing to take responsibility—nor, when you do see the problem, do you wish to pay any heed to this matter, you settle for 'good enough.' Is being careless and perfunctory in this way not an attempt to deceive God? If, when I worked and fellowshiped about the truth to you, I felt that 'good enough' was acceptable, then as befits each of your calibers and pursuits, what could you gain from that? If I had the same attitude as you, you could gain nothing. Why do I say this? Part of it is that you do nothing earnestly, and part is that you are of quite poor caliber, quite numb. It is because I see all of you numb and without love for the truth, and not pursuing the truth, along with your poor calibers, that I must speak in detail. I must spell everything out, and break things down and fragment them in My speech, and speak of things from every angle, in every which way. Only then do you understand a bit. If I were perfunctory with you, and spoke a bit on whatever topic, whenever I felt like it, neither putting thought into it nor taking pains, without My

heart in it, not speaking when I did not feel like it, what could you gain? With calibers like yours, you would not understand the truth. You would gain nothing, much less attain salvation. But I cannot do that, instead I must speak in detail. I must go into detail and give examples regarding the states of each sort of person, the attitudes people have toward the truth, and each sort of corrupt disposition; only then will you comprehend what I'm saying, and understand what you hear. No matter what aspect of the truth is fellowshiped, I speak through various means, with styles of fellowship for adults and for children, and also in the form of rationales and stories, using theory and practice, and talking of experiences, in order that people may understand the truth and enter the reality. In this way, those who have caliber and possess hearts will have a chance to understand and accept the truth and be saved. But your attitude toward your duty has always been one of carelessness and perfunctoriness, of dragging your feet, and you are unconcerned with how long a delay you cause. You do not reflect on how to seek the truth in order to solve problems, you give no thought to how to perform your duty properly in order to be able to testify to God. This is neglecting your duty. So your life grows very slowly, but you are not upset by how much time you have wasted. In fact, if you performed your duty conscientiously and responsibly, it wouldn't even take five or six years before you were able to talk of your experiences and bear testimony to God, and the various work would be carried out to great effect—but you are not willing to be mindful of God's will, nor do you strive toward the truth. There are some things you do not know how to do, so I give you exact instructions. You do not have to think, you just have to listen and get on with it. That is the only bit of responsibility you must take on—but even that is beyond you.

Where is your loyalty? It is nowhere to be seen! All you do is say pleasant-sounding things. In your hearts, you know what you should do, but you simply do not practice the truth. This is rebellion against God, and at root, it is a lack of love for the truth. You know full well in your hearts how to act in accordance with the truth—you just don't put it into practice. This is a serious problem; you are staring at the truth without putting it into practice. You are not someone who obeys God at all. To perform a duty in God's house, the least you must do is seek and practice the truth and act according to the principles. If you cannot practice the truth in your performance of your duty, then where can you practice it? And if you do not practice any of the truth, then you are a nonbeliever. What is your purpose, really, if you do not accept the truth—much less practice the truth—and simply muddle along in the house of God? Do you wish to make God's house your retirement home, or an almshouse? If so, you are mistaken—God's house does not take care of freeloaders, of wastrels. Anyone of poor humanity, who does not perform their duty gladly, who is unfit to perform a duty, must all be cleared out; all nonbelievers who do not accept the truth at all must be cast out. Some people understand the truth but cannot put it into practice in performing their duties. When they see a problem, they do not solve it, and even though they know it is their responsibility, they do not give it their all. If you do not even carry out responsibilities that you are capable of, then what value or effect could performing your duty possibly have? Is it meaningful to believe in God in this way? Someone who understands the truth but cannot practice it, who cannot bear the hardships they ought to—such a person is unfit to perform a duty” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the

Last Days. To Perform One's Duty Well, One Must at Least Be Possessed of a Conscience and

Reason). I felt so ashamed after reading God's words. God is perfectly genuine in His treatment of people. To save us, He uses all sorts of ways to fellowship with us, giving us highly detailed fellowship on various aspects of the truth, and He is very patient while doing so. He gives us many examples to guide us in case we don't understand, and is always fellowshipping truths to water and provide for us, and has paid the greatest possible price. I reflected on my attitude in fulfilling my duty, and realized that the church was entrusting me with such an important duty, but I wasn't taking responsibility. I was approaching it carelessly, slacking off wherever I could, playing tricks, and being crafty. Where was my humanity? God was genuine with us, but all I gave back to Him was deception. Previously I'd read in God's words about some people with poor humanity, but I didn't make the connection to myself. Then I saw that I indeed had poor humanity, and no conscience. It looked like I was doing my duty every day and was paying a bit of a price, and I went through all the motions. But my heart wasn't facing toward God. I wasn't trying to do everything I could in my duty, to put my all into it, to be thoughtful and conscientious. Instead I was being perfunctory and just going through the motions. I wasn't doing a duty—I wasn't even up to the standard of doing service. I knew I couldn't compensate for the losses caused to the work due to my irresponsibility. I prayed to God, asking Him to give me a chance to repent, and from that point on I resolved to change my attitude in my duty. I could not go on being so careless.

Then I read a passage of God's words: **“Since people have corrupt dispositions, they are often perfunctory and careless when they perform their duties. This is one of the most serious problems of all. If people are to perform their duties properly, they must first address this problem of perfunctoriness and carelessness. As long as they have such**

a perfunctory and careless attitude, they will not be able to perform their duties properly, which means that solving the problem of perfunctoriness and carelessness is extremely important. So how should they practice? Firstly, they must solve the problem of their state of mind; they must approach their duties correctly, and do things with seriousness and a sense of responsibility. They should not intend to be deceitful or perfunctory. One's duty is performed for God, not any one person; if people are able to accept God's scrutiny, they will have the correct state of mind. What's more, after doing something, people must examine it, and reflect on it, and if they feel a bit uneasy in their hearts, and after detailed inspection, they discover there really is a problem, then they must make changes; once these changes have been made, they will feel at ease in their hearts. When people feel uneasy, this proves there is a problem, and they must diligently examine what they have done, especially at key stages. This is a responsible attitude toward performing one's duty. When one can be serious, take responsibility, and give all their heart and strength, the work will be done properly. Sometimes you are in the wrong state of mind, and cannot find or discover a mistake that is clear as day. If you were in the right state of mind, then, with the enlightenment and guidance of the Holy Spirit, you would be able to identify the issue. If the Holy Spirit guided you and gave you an awareness, allowing you to feel clarity at heart and to know where the error lies, you would then be able to correct the deviation and strive for the truth principles. If you were in the wrong state of mind, and were absent-minded and careless, would you be able to notice the mistake? You would not. What is seen from this? This shows that to perform their duties well, it is very important that people cooperate; their frames of mind are very important, and

where they direct their thoughts and ideas is very important. God scrutinizes and can see what state of mind people are in, and how much energy they exert as they perform their duties. It is crucial that people put all their hearts and strength into what they do. Their cooperation is a crucial component. Only if people strive to have no regrets about the duties they have completed and the things they have done, and not to be in debt to God, will they be acting with all their hearts and strength. If you consistently fail to put all your heart and strength into performing your duty, if you are perennially careless and perfunctory, and cause tremendous harm to the work, and fall far short of the effects required by God, then only one thing can happen to you: You will be cast out. And will there still be time for regrets, then? There will not. These actions will become an eternal lament, a stain! To be perennially careless and perfunctory is a stain, it is a serious transgression—yes or no? (Yes.) You must strive to carry out your obligations, and everything you ought to do, with all your heart and strength, you must not be careless and perfunctory, or leave any regrets. If you can do that, the duty you perform shall be commemorated by God. Those things commemorated by God are good deeds. What, then, are the things that are not commemorated by God? (They are transgressions and evil deeds.) You might not accept that they are evil deeds if they were described thus presently, but, if a day comes when there are serious consequences to these things, and they give rise to a negative influence, then you will sense that these things are not mere behavioral transgressions, but evil deeds. When you realize this, you will be regretful, and think to yourself: ‘I should have chosen an ounce of prevention! With a little more thought and effort at the start, this consequence could have been avoided.’ Nothing will wipe this

eternal stain from your heart, and if it should leave you in permanent debt, then you'll be in trouble. So today you must strive to put all your heart and strength into the commission given to you by God, to perform every duty with a clear conscience, without any regrets, and in a fashion that is commemorated by God. Whatever you do, do not be careless and perfunctory. If you make a mistake on an impulse and it is a serious transgression, this will become an eternal stain. Once you have regrets, you will not be able to make up for them, and they will be permanent regrets. Both of these paths should be seen clearly. Which is the one you should choose, in order to meet with God's praise? Performing your duty with all your heart and strength, and preparing and accumulating good deeds, without any regrets. Whatever you do, do not do evil that will disturb others' performance of their duties, do not do anything that goes against the truth and is in resistance against God, and do not incur lifelong regrets. What happens when a person has committed too many transgressions? They are accruing God's anger at them in His presence! If you transgress ever more, and God's wrath toward you grows ever greater, then, ultimately, you shall be **punished**" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Prior to that, I had admitted that I was being perfunctory in my duty, but I'd never realized the consequences that could have on me, or how God would see and define someone like that. Now I've seen from God's word that outwardly such people seem not to do great evil, but their attitude toward their duty is loathsome to God, and if they don't repent, then in the end they'll lose their chance at salvation. Being exposed in this situation, I saw how serious my problem of muddling through my duty and being irresponsible was. It was because of my irresponsibility that the video had to undergo further editing, resulting in all our work being held up. That was

a transgression. If I didn't correct my state right away, and went on being careless and irresponsible, then I could offend God's disposition and be cast out at any point, at which point it would be too late to regret. From God's words, we found a path of practice to resolve our carelessness in our duty. First, we must have the proper mindset, shoulder responsibility, and accept God's scrutiny. Then we have to carefully review things and not gloss over problems we come across.

Later, we put God's words into practice. We summed up the reasons for our failures, and diligently went over the videos based on principles, not letting a single detail slip by. We sought the truth principles together and worked out how to perform the edits. This fellowship and discussion with the brothers and sisters helped us to better understand the principles, and we realized that even though we'd reviewed some videos multiple times, now that we were being more aware, we discovered more issues involving details. This showed more clearly how serious our problem of skating through our duty had been in the past. Then we analyzed how we should edit these videos based on those principles, complete all the edits that we were capable of, and then give them to the leader for review once we couldn't see any issues. Everyone felt so much more at ease after we put that into practice. After editing those videos, we passed them on to the leader to review. He said, "These are pretty good, and I don't see any issues. You did well this time." When the leader said that, I couldn't help but thank God from my heart. I knew it wasn't that we'd done a good job. Instead, God led and enlightened us when we were slightly willing to turn around and repent, and stopped being so careless. This experience really showed me that only if you really put your heart into a duty will it be meaningful and will you feel at peace. Thank God!

92. Agonizing Choices

By Alina, Spain

In 1999, I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days, and before long I was elected to be a church leader. In December of 2000, at noon one day, I was eating with my two kids when five officers burst into the house and started tearing the place apart, searching the place without showing a warrant. At that time, my son was only six years old, and the two kids were clutching on to my clothing in fear, their hands trembling. In the end, they found a Bible and a journal of devotionals I'd written. They were pulling me and pushing me, trying to get me into the police car. The kids were crying and yelling, "Mommy! Don't go!" At that moment, tears suddenly started pouring down my face, because I didn't know if I'd ever be able to go back and see them again. My heart was filled with sorrow. Later, they brought me into a PSB interrogation room where they handcuffed me to a metal chair. Several people were there staring at me ferociously. I was terrified then, and I prayed to God ceaselessly, asking Him to give me faith. I thought of God's words: **"Now is the time that I shall test you: Will you offer your loyalty to Me? Can you loyally follow Me to the end of the road? Be not afraid; with My support, who could ever block this road?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 10). God's words gave me faith, and thinking about how God is my support, I felt less afraid. No matter how brutal the police were, they were in God's hands. I swore that no matter how they tortured me, I would not be a Judas and betray God. I pledged my life to stand witness for God!

One of the officers started the interrogation: "Who converted you to believe in Almighty God? Who is your leader? Where is the church's money kept?" I said, "I don't know a thing." The director of the National

Security Brigade said, “We found your home today because we already have evidence of your faith. We can get you convicted even if you don’t say a word. But if you tell us what you know, we’ll let you go home right now.” I didn’t say a word. He then said, “Your kids are so young—it would be terrible if they didn’t have their mom to care for them. If their teachers and classmates find out their mom is in jail, they’ll be taunted and looked down on. Wouldn’t that be incredibly harmful to their psyches? Could you steel yourself to that? You wouldn’t brush off your children for your faith, would you?” Hearing him say that immediately brought to mind the children’s looks of fear when I’d been arrested, and in a moment my heart was in a knot. All that happened today would traumatize and affect the children so greatly! If I were sentenced, who would care for them? Especially my son, who’d always been illness-prone, what would he do without me there to care for him? If they were discriminated against and laughed at by teachers and classmates, would they be able to deal with it? My tears flowed ceaselessly at these thoughts and I rushed to pray to God: “God! I’m worried about my kids and I feel like a wreck. Please protect my heart so I can be calm, rely on You, and stand witness.” After I prayed, I thought of these words of God: **“Despite the fact that you are here before Me, doing things for Me, deep down you are still thinking of your wife, children, and parents at home. Are all these things your property? Why do you not entrust them into My hands? Do you not have sufficient faith in Me? Or is it that you are afraid I will make inappropriate arrangements for you? Why do you always worry about the family of your flesh? You always pine for your loved ones! Do I have a certain place in your heart?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 59). God’s words immediately brightened my heart. God is the Creator, and He has dominion and governance over everyone’s

fate. Whatever happened with my two kids in the future was in His hands, and my worrying was useless. I had to have faith in God, and entrust them to His hands. At this thought, I calmed down, and no longer worried for them so much. I knew the police were using the children to blackmail me into selling out the church. They were the ones who had arrested me illegally, destroyed my normal family life, and now they were saying it was my faith that prevented me taking care of my children. Wasn't this distorting the facts, and turning black into white? When that occurred to me, I shot back at them, "Is it because of my faith, or is it because you people have me locked up in here? Believers in God read God's word and seek to be good people, they don't do anything illegal. Why are you constantly arresting believers?" They burst out in raucous laughter when I said that, and one officer said, "You are so naïve. If everyone believed in God, who'd listen to the CCP? Then who would the Party lead? So we can't let you believe, and if you do, you'll be arrested!" I was infuriated, and it reminded me of something God said: **"In a dark society such as this, where the demons are merciless and inhumane, how could the king of devils, who kills people without batting an eye, tolerate the existence of a God who is lovely, kind, and also holy? How could it applaud and cheer the arrival of God? These lackeys! They repay kindness with hate, they began treating God as an enemy long ago, they abuse God, they are savage in the extreme, they have not the slightest regard for God, they plunder and pillage, they have lost all conscience, they go against all conscience, and they tempt the innocent into senselessness. Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin!"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). Through God's words, I saw into the CCP's essence. They are perverse and contrary to Heaven. It was God who created all things, created this humanity, and it's God who nurtures and sustains all of mankind. Worshiping God is ordained by Heaven and acknowledged by earth, but the Communist Party doesn't let people believe in and follow God, they promote atheism and evolution to mislead people. They even shamelessly claim that "there is absolutely no God in the world" and that "the people's happiness comes entirely from the Party." They want the people to be deeply grateful, to listen to and obey them. The CCP is incredibly evil and despicable! In the last days, God personally came to earth to save mankind, expressing millions of words. What the CCP most fears is that people will read the word of God and understand the truth, and that they will discern the Party and, no longer under its control, will turn toward God. That's why the CCP does everything they can to arrest Christians, vainly hoping to suppress God's work and reach their goal of controlling humanity forever. Once I'd personally experienced their persecution, I saw their demonic essence of hating the truth and being the enemy of God, and despised from the depths of my heart this evil pack of demons who resisted God. I resolved to firmly follow God and stand witness to God no matter how much I suffered.

Later on, my husband got me out on bail by paying someone to get it through. The day of my release, a cop said, "Based on your current attitude you're definitely going to keep on believing. We'll be watching you, and we'll get you back in here the moment we find you gathering or sharing the gospel!" So that I could keep believing and doing my duty normally, I was forced to move several times. My husband was a township deputy head at the time and he'd lost any chance of promotion since I was arrested for my faith. Then in April 2007, one evening he came home and said, "Some

cadres will be promoted in the city soon. Because of your faith, I haven't passed political background checks the last few times I had a chance. I've told my leader I want to be part of the field this time, and he said he'd recommend me as long as you give up your religion." He also told me, "You just need to stop believing for us to have a good life, and we can give our children a stable home. If you insist on keeping your faith, we have to get a divorce. I don't want to be dragged into this anymore. Give it some thought!" Hearing him say all this was really painful for me. If we divorced, so much hurt would be caused to our children! He'd always been good to me, and our children were obedient. He had a job, I was in business, and we really had a happy life. Our wonderful family was being torn apart because of the Chinese government's persecution. Thinking about this, I felt sick, like my heart was being torn asunder. I prayed to God: "God, I can't leave You, but I can't let go of my husband and my kids. I don't know what to do. Please enlighten me, so I can understand Your will." Then, I thought of God's word: **"There is no relationship between a believing husband and an unbelieving wife, and there is no relationship between believing children and unbelieving parents; these two types of people are completely incompatible. Prior to entering into rest, one has physical relatives, but once one has entered into rest, one will no longer have any physical relatives to speak of"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). I thought through God's words and understood that people of faith and people without faith are two types of people with different essences. Their outlooks on life and values are different. I was on the right life path of faith, that of pursuing the truth. My husband was on the path of an official career, a path to climb the ranks and make money. To work toward promotion, he was disregarding years of marriage and our children's feelings, and choosing divorce instead. That's

because in his heart, his status and future had become more important to him than me and the kids. Even though he claimed he wanted to give the kids a stable home and have a happy life, it was all an illusion. He was good to me before, because I didn't have any impact on his personal interests. Now my faith and arrest were impacting his official career and had become a barrier to his promotion and making more money, so he wanted to divorce. It seemed really cold when I thought of that. I saw that there's no real love between human beings, just deceit and exploitation. My husband knew very well that the Communist Party was an evil party, but he kept taking its side, telling me to give up my faith, even pressuring me with divorce. We had different outlooks and were on different paths, and we wouldn't be happy even if we stayed together. When I realized this, I knew what I had to do.

We went to the Civil Affairs Bureau the next morning to do our divorce paperwork, and on the way he said, "You know, I don't want to divorce but there's no other option. Take good care of yourself." Hearing him say this made me suddenly tear up. I thought of all the hardships and the mocking from others that I'd have to face after the divorce, and I was gripped with pain. I quickly prayed to God, asking Him to protect my heart. I thought of God's words: **"You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do. You must not throw away the truth for the sake of a peaceful family life, and you must not lose your life's dignity and integrity for the sake of momentary enjoyment. You should pursue all that is beautiful and good, and you should pursue a path in life that is more meaningful. If you lead such a vulgar life, and do not pursue any objectives, do you not waste your life? What can you gain from**

such a life? You should forsake all enjoyments of the flesh for the sake of one truth, and should not throw away all truths for the sake of a little enjoyment. People like this have no integrity or dignity; there is no meaning to their existence!’” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). I saw from God’s words that no matter how good a life someone may live in the flesh, no matter how many others envy and admire them, none of that means anything. Only pursuing the truth and doing the duty of a created being can gain God’s approval. Only this is a life of integrity and dignity, and is the most meaningful and valuable of lives. Thinking of this was really freeing, and I handled the divorce proceedings without misgivings.

In May 2011 while in a gathering, I was arrested again. They were the same officers from a decade before. They found my ID and called my name out, saying, “These ten years we’ve been to your house plenty of times without finding you and now we’ve really struck gold. We won’t let you go this time!” As they spoke, they handcuffed me and put me in the police car. In the car I thought of three sisters who had been arrested before and brutally tortured by the police for a whole month. One of them had suffered permanent damage to her left arm because she’d been left suspended for too long. Thinking of that set my heart pounding. I was afraid I’d be beaten to disability or death. I urgently called out to God in my heart: “God! Please protect me and guide me through this environment. Even if I’m beaten to death I’ll never be a Judas.” I thought of God’s words after my prayer: **“You know that all things in the environment that surrounds you are there by My permission, all planned by Me. See clearly and satisfy My heart in the environment I have given to you. Do not fear, the Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He stands behind you and He is your shield”**” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the

Beginning, Chapter 26). It was true. My life and death were entirely in God's hands, and they couldn't take my life from me without God allowing it. I thought of Job going through his trials. God wouldn't let Satan harm Job's life and Satan couldn't go against what God said. This brought me some peace in my heart and gave me faith to face what lay ahead.

Later on, the head of the National Security Brigade questioned me. He said, "This is a major, critical case for our city right now. You were arrested ten years ago, and in 2009 someone reported that you were spreading the gospel. Several attempts to arrest you failed. This time, we got you on site at a gathering, so even if you don't say anything, we can still get you for seven to ten years. Once you're sentenced, your two kids won't be accepted to college and they'll never get civil service jobs. And they'll be discriminated against by everyone because they have a mother like you. You'll be to blame for ruining their futures. They'll hate you for the rest of their lives! Even if you don't think of yourself, think of your kids' futures. If you cooperate with us, tell us who the leader above you is, and give us the church's money, we'll let you go." Hearing him say that left me feeling incredibly disgusted. It is the Communist Party who stops at nothing to persecute Christians—they even used my children's futures to threaten me, and force me to sell out the church and betray God, then claimed that it was my faith ruining their future prospects. That was a complete distortion of the facts!

They questioned me that day consistently until after 2 a.m. When they saw I wouldn't talk, they sent me to the detention house. One officer said, "This time you'll be sentenced and do prison time!" The cell was dark and damp. My rheumatism and rheumatic heart disease just got worse and worse, and every single joint ached. I was on watch for two hours every night, and after standing a while I had heart palpitations and tightness in my

chest. It was awful. I thought about the officer saying I'd get seven to ten years, and I started calculating how many days there were in seven years, and then in ten years. That would be thousands of days and nights. How would I endure? Would I live to walk out of here? Thinking this, I couldn't stop the tears from flowing down my face and I felt darkness taking over my heart. I realized I wasn't in the right state, so I said an urgent prayer, asking God to protect my heart and give me the faith to endure these circumstances. I remembered God's words: **"In this vast world, who has personally been examined by Me? Who has personally heard the words of My Spirit? So many people grope and search in the darkness; so many pray amid adversity; so many, hungry and cold, watch in hope; and so many are bound by Satan; yet so many know not where to turn, so many betray Me in the midst of their happiness, so many are ungrateful, and so many are loyal to the deceitful schemes of Satan. Who among you is Job? Who is Peter? Why have I repeatedly mentioned Job? Why have I referred to Peter so many times? Have you ever ascertained what My hopes for you are? You should spend more time pondering such things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 8). After pondering God's words, I understood that God approved of Job and Peter because they truly believed and submitted. Job went through trials, lost his wealth and his children, and his whole body was covered with boils, yet he was still able to praise God's name, and say "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah" (Job 1:21), which humiliated Satan. And Peter was crucified upside down for God, obedient till death, making resounding witness. As for me, I'd enjoyed so much watering and sustenance from God's words, but I wanted to run away as soon as I faced a tiny bit of suffering. Where was my faith? Where was my obedience? I was a far cry

from what God requires. I clung to my life so much, how could I give testimony for God? At this I felt really regretful and guilty and prayed to God: “God! I’m ready to put myself in Your hands. No matter how many years I get or how much I suffer, I wish to stand witness for You and humiliate Satan.” To my surprise, after I offered up everything and was ready to stand witness, I was released. I found out later that my ex-husband, afraid my imprisonment would impact our kids’ university admission, bribed someone to secure my release.

My ex-husband drove to the detention house to meet me on the day of my release. He saw how different I looked after losing so much weight, and asked me, “You’ve gotten so thin after just a month, you wouldn’t have made it several years. This time you’ll stop believing, right?” When I didn’t respond, he kept pressing me: “Come on, you’ll stop believing?” I told him very calmly, “I’ll keep believing! Having faith is ordained by Heaven and acknowledged by earth, and I’ll believe as long as I live.” Hearing me say this, he hit the steering wheel in anger, sighed and shook his head, then burst out, saying, “I’ve got to hand it to your God! The Party tries everything to win over people’s hearts, but it never can, while you believers insist on believing without any material gain and even after multiple arrests. Your God is really something!” I thanked God for guiding me to stand witness.

A few days after returning home, my son came back from school and said to me solemnly, “Mom, today you have to make a choice. If you want to keep me as your son, you have to give up your faith. If you stay in your religion, I’m going to leave home and you’ll never see me again.” I was stunned. My son had always been so close to me and he’d never opposed my faith before. Why had he said this today? It was really painful, and I felt that this path of faith really was full of adversity, and ups and downs. There

was a choice at every step. I felt that this was too difficult a decision, so I prayed to God and asked Him to guide me to understand His will. After I prayed, I thought of a passage of God's words: **"In every step of work that God does within people, externally it appears to be interactions between people, as if born of human arrangements or from human disturbance. But behind the scenes, every step of work, and everything that happens, is a wager made by Satan before God, and requires people to stand firm in their testimony to God. Take when Job was tried, for example: Behind the scenes, Satan was making a bet with God, and what happened to Job was the deeds of men and the disturbance of men. Behind every step of work that God does in you is Satan's wager with God—behind it all is a battle"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). God's words helped me understand that, although it looked like it was my son asking me to choose, in fact it was Satan tempting and attacking me, to see if I would choose my familial relationship with my son, or if I would choose God. I had to stand witness to shame Satan. Thinking on this, I said to my son, "I cannot depart from God. Choosing to leave God would be like you deciding to leave me today. It would be unconscionable and it would let God down. I will always follow God. That's my choice!" Hearing me say this, he left in tears. I felt upset at the time too, but I knew that I had made the right choice!

About half an hour later, he came back and said to me, "Mom, I was wrong. I shouldn't have forced you to make that choice. My dad said that if you're caught again, you'll never get out. I was scared you'd get caught, so I wanted to use that tactic to get you to give up your faith." Hearing him explain this filled me with disgust for this anti-God Communist Party demon. Just because I believed in God, the Communist Party arrested and

persecuted me, tearing apart my family and dragging my husband and children into it. The more it persecutes me, the more I will forsake it, and follow God with an ironclad will!

93. Harmonious Cooperation Is Key in a Duty

By Katherine, USA

In the summer of 2020, Sister Audrea and I were making videos in the church. At the time, I was responsible for assigning tasks. I arranged for Audrea to do simple tasks, while I was producing the important ones. I thought I could handle them on my own because I had always completed major tasks alone in the past. I had more practice than Audrea, so I felt she didn't need to be involved in those tasks. Besides, if I did it independently, the credit would go to me, which would better highlight my abilities and make my brothers and sisters look up to me. Later, my workload increased significantly, so I had to work overtime every day. Sometimes, Audrea slept early while I still burned the midnight oil, I woke up earlier in the morning than her, and I felt very tired. But I didn't want to let her share the burden with me. I had always completed my tasks on my own, so if she helped me with my workload, the brothers and sisters would definitely think my capabilities in my work were poor, which would be embarrassing. Sometimes I thought, if I let Audrea help, things would go faster, I wouldn't be so busy, and the results would be better than if I did it alone. But when I thought about sharing the credit with her, I was unsatisfied. And so, just like that, I never let Audrea participate in my tasks. At the time, I didn't reflect on myself until one day, when a sister told me Audrea didn't bear a burden in her duty and asked me to fellowship with her. I then thought, "Does Audrea not bearing a burden have something to do with me? I'm so busy every day, and I know she has time, but I don't assign her new tasks, which leaves her nothing to do." I vaguely realized that doing this wasn't right, and that by doing the job alone, I would eventually delay the work of the church. But then I thought I could handle it by trying a little harder, so I left

things as they were. Although I realized my intention was wrong, I still couldn't let go, which was very painful for me, so I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me in forsaking my wrong intentions.

During my devotionals, I read this passage of God's word: **“Although leaders and workers have partners, and everyone who performs any duty has a partner, antichrists believe they have good caliber and are better than ordinary people, so ordinary people are not worthy of being their partner, and are all inferior to them. This is why antichrists like to call the shots and don't like to discuss things with anyone else. They think doing so makes them look stupid and incompetent. What kind of viewpoint is this? What kind of disposition is this? Is this an arrogant disposition? They think that to cooperate and discuss things with others, to ask them questions and seek answers from them, is undignified and demeaning, an affront to their self-respect. And so, in order to protect their self-respect, they don't allow transparency in anything they do, nor do they tell others about it, much less discuss it with them. They think that to discuss with others is to show themselves as incompetent; that to always solicit other people's opinions means they are stupid and incapable of thinking for themselves; that working with others in completing a task or sorting out some problem makes them appear useless. Isn't this their arrogant and absurd mentality? Isn't this their corrupt disposition? The arrogance and self-righteousness within them is too obvious; they have lost all normal human reason, and they aren't quite right in the head. They always think they have abilities, can finish things by themselves, and have no need to coordinate with others. Since they have such corrupt dispositions, they are unable to achieve harmonious cooperation. They believe that to work with others is to dilute and fragment their power,**

that when work is shared with others, their own power is lessened and they can't decide everything for themselves, meaning they lack real power, which for them is a tremendous loss. And so, no matter what happens to them, if they believe they understand and they know how to handle it, they won't discuss it with anyone else, they will want to keep control over it. They will prefer to make mistakes over letting other people know, they will prefer to be wrong over sharing power with someone else, and they will prefer dismissal over letting other people interfere in their work. This is an antichrist. They would rather harm the interests of God's house, would rather wager the interests of God's house, than share their power with anyone else. They think that when they're doing a piece of work or handling some matter, this isn't the performance of a duty, but rather a chance to display themselves and stand out from others, and a chance to exercise power. Therefore, although they say that they will harmoniously cooperate with others and that they will discuss matters together with others when they occur, the truth is, in the depths of their heart, they are unwilling to give up their power or status. They think that so long as they understand some doctrines and are capable of doing it themselves, they don't need to collaborate with anyone else; they think that it should be carried out and completed alone, and that only this makes them competent. Is this view correct? They don't know that if they violate principles, they aren't fulfilling their duties, so they aren't able to carry out God's commission, and are merely doing service. Rather than seek the truth principles when performing their duty, they exercise power according to their thoughts and intentions, show off, and parade themselves. No matter who their partner is or what they do, they never want to discuss things, they always want to act on their own, and they always want to

have the final say. They are obviously playing with power and using power to do things. Antichrists all love power, and when they have status, they want more power. When they possess power, antichrists are liable to use their status to show off and parade themselves, to make others look up to them and to achieve their goal of standing out from the crowd. Thus do the antichrists fixate upon power and status, and will never relinquish it, ever” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They

Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). In God’s word, I saw that antichrists have a very arrogant disposition and don’t cooperate with anyone. They think that if they share work with others, they will appear incompetent, power will be dispersed, and they won’t be admired by others. So, they would rather let the work of the church be impacted than share work with others. I reflected and realized I was the same. I didn’t want Audrea to take part in my tasks because I feared her participation would make me seem incompetent and damage my image, so I did it alone. As a result, I was exhausted, and the work was delayed. I really was too arrogant and unreasonable! No matter what work exists in the church, no one can do it alone. Everyone needs partners and help, and brothers and sisters need to work together with one heart to complete the work, because no one is perfect. No matter how high their caliber, or what their gifts and talents are, everyone has shortcomings and deficiencies, and we need to learn to let go of ourselves and cooperate with our partners to perform our duties well. But I had an arrogant disposition. I was too ambitious in my duty, I wanted all the credit, and I wanted others to admire me. I would rather delay the church’s work than allow people to join or interfere in my work. By doing my duty in this way, I was not accruing good deeds, I was doing evil! When I realized this, I felt very sad, so I came before God and

prayed, “God, I am too arrogant, and I lack all humanity and reason. I wish to repent. Please guide me in knowing myself.”

One day I was looking for parts of God’s word related to my state, and I found this passage: **“What must one do to perform their duty well? One must come to perform it with all their heart and all their energy. Using all one’s heart and energy means keeping all one’s thoughts on performing their duty and not letting other things occupy them, and then applying the energy that one has, exerting the entirety of one’s power, and bringing one’s caliber, gifts, strengths, and the things they have understood to bear on the task. If you have the comprehension and understanding ability, and have a good idea, you must communicate with others about it. This is what it means to cooperate in harmony. This is how you will perform your duty well, how you will achieve satisfactory performance of your duty. If you wish always to take on everything yourself, if you always want to do great things alone, if you always want the focus to be on you and not others, are you performing your duty? What you are doing is called autocracy; it is putting on a show. It is satanic behavior, not the performance of duty. No one, no matter their strengths, gifts, or special talents, can take on all the work themselves; they must learn to cooperate in harmony if they are to do the church’s work well. That is why harmonious cooperation is a principle of the practice of performing one’s duty. As long as you apply all your heart and all your energy and all your faithfulness, and offer up everything you can do, you are performing your duty well. If you have a thought or idea, tell it to others; do not hold it back or keep it tucked away—if you have suggestions, offer them; whoever’s idea is in accordance with the truth is to be accepted and obeyed. Do this, and you will have achieved cooperation in**

harmony. This is what it means to perform one's duty faithfully. In performing your duty, you are not to take on everything yourself, nor are you to work yourself to death, or to be 'the only flower in blossom' or maverick; rather, you are to learn how to cooperate with others in harmony, and to do all you can, to fulfill your responsibilities, to exert all your energy. That is what it means to perform your duty. To perform your duty is to brandish all the power and light that you have in order to achieve a result. That is enough. Do not try always to show off, always to say high-sounding things, to do things by yourself. You should learn how to work with others, and you should focus more on listening to others' suggestions and discovering their strengths. In this way, cooperating in harmony becomes easy. If you try always to show off and have what you say go, you are not cooperating in harmony. What are you doing? You are causing a disturbance and undermining others. To cause a disturbance and undermine others is to play the role of Satan; it is not the performance of duty. If you always do things that cause a disturbance and undermine others, then no matter how much effort you expend or care you take, God will not remember" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation). As I contemplated God's word, I felt ashamed. God's word revealed my state. To show off and establish myself, and be looked up to, I wanted to take on video work alone, without letting Audrea participate. I felt that if Audrea got involved, I would be robbed of credit. That way, I wouldn't have the capital to show off, and there would be no way for me to gain others' admiration. I thought I would lose out like that. I knew the workload was heavy, that I would cause delays if I did it alone, and that if Audrea was involved, the work would be done faster and the results would be better. I also knew most of the work in the team was in my hands, that

she was often idle and had no work, and that her state was affected, but I still wouldn't let her share the burden with me. I wanted to do the job by myself both to claim all the credit for myself, and also to prove I had good technical and professional skills. All I was thinking about the whole time was my status and face. I didn't consider the work of the church at all, and I didn't care about my sister's feelings. I really had no conscience or humanity! Outwardly, I woke up early and worked hard every day, as if I could bear a burden, suffer, and pay a price, but actually, I was engaging in personal endeavors and satisfying my own ambitions and desires. I wasn't fulfilling my duty as a created being at all. I was disturbing the work of the church under the pretext of doing my duty, and committing evil. And I was walking the path of an antichrist.

Later, I saw two more passages of God's words: **"When God requires that people fulfill their duty well, He is not asking them to complete a certain number of tasks or accomplish any great endeavors, nor to perform any great undertakings. What God wants is for people to be able to do all they can in a down-to-earth way, and live in accordance with His words. God does not need you to be great or noble, or bring about any miracles, nor does He want to see any pleasant surprises in you. He does not need such things. All God needs is for you to steadfastly practice according to His words. When you listen to God's words, do what you have understood, carry out what you have comprehended, remember well what you have heard, and then, when the time comes to practice, do so according to God's words. Let them become your life, your realities, and what you live out. Thus, God will be satisfied. You always seek greatness, nobility, and status; you always seek exaltation. How does God feel when He sees this? He loathes it, and He will distance Himself from you. The more you pursue things**

like greatness, nobility, and being superior to others, distinguished, outstanding, and noteworthy, the more disgusting God finds you. If you do not reflect upon yourself and repent, then God will despise you and forsake you. Avoid becoming someone whom God finds disgusting; be a person that God loves. So, how can one attain God's love? By accepting the truth obediently, standing in the position of a created being, acting by God's words with one's feet on the ground, properly performing one's duties, being an honest person, and living out a human likeness. This is enough, God will be satisfied. People must be sure not to hold ambition or entertain idle dreams, not to seek fame, gains, and status or to stand out from the crowd. Even more, they must not try to be a person of greatness or superhuman, superior among men and making others worship them. That is the desire of corrupt humanity, and it is the path of Satan; God does not save such people. If people incessantly pursue fame, gains, and status without repenting, then there is no cure for them, and only one outcome: to be cast out" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation). "What is the standard by which a person's actions and behavior are judged to be good or evil? It is whether or not they, in their thoughts, outpourings, and actions, possess the testimony of putting the truth into practice and of living out the truth reality. If you do not have this reality or live this out, then without doubt, you are an evildoer. How does God regard evildoers? To God, your thoughts and external acts do not bear testimony for Him, nor do they humiliate and defeat Satan; instead, they bring shame to Him, and they are riddled with marks of the dishonor that you have brought upon Him. You are not testifying for God, you are not expending yourself for God, nor are you fulfilling your responsibilities and obligations to God; instead, you

are acting for your own sake. What does ‘for your own sake’ mean? To be precise, it means for Satan’s sake. Therefore, in the end, God will say, ‘Depart from Me, you that work iniquity.’ In God’s eyes, your actions will not be seen as good deeds, they will be considered evil deeds. Not only will they fail to gain God’s approval—they will be condemned. What does one hope to gain from such a belief in God? Would such belief not come to naught in the end?” (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). From God’s words, I understood God’s will. In fact, God’s requirements of man are simple. God doesn’t need people to do great things or do many earth-shattering deeds, and God doesn’t ask us to be exceptional or great men. God only wants us to stand in the position of a created being, pursue the truth in a down-to-earth manner, do our duties to the best of our ability, and live by God’s word. God evaluates whether we are qualified in performing our duties not based on how much we achieve or the size of our contribution, but on whether our motives for doing things are being considerate of God’s will, and whether we do our best. Only when we have the right motives and take the right path can we have testimony in our duty. If people perform their duty only to satisfy their own ambitions and desires, no matter how much effort they expend or how much they contribute, in the end, they will be despised and cast out by God. I realized that I always wanted to keep all the credit for my duty. My arrogant disposition made me want to do all the work and not cooperate with my partner. I worked hard and exhausted myself to make others think highly of me. None of my effort was to satisfy God, it was all to satisfy my personal desires and ambitions. Even if I achieved some things, and gained the admiration and approval of others, what was the point? None of this meant I performed my duty in a qualified manner. On the contrary, I acted by my

satanic dispositions, took on the work alone, delayed the progress of the video work, and disturbed the work of the church. Eventually, I would have ended up being rejected and cast out by God. In reality, cooperating with Audrea would make up for my shortcomings in my duty. She focused on learning, was willing to study, and her skills had progressed rapidly, but I didn't focus on studying skills, and mostly relied on my experience. Although I had been doing this duty for a long time, my skills hadn't improved much. On top of that, a person's thoughts are always one-sided. People with self-awareness can let go of themselves in their duty, and are willing to cooperate with others to perform their duties well. This is the reason we should possess and how we should practice. But I was arrogant, self-righteous, and desired status. I didn't want to let go of my interests and cooperate with my sister. These things impacted the progress and results of the work. If I had cooperated with her earlier, and we had helped each other, the results of the work would have been much better than they were. The more I reflected, the more I saw I was too arrogant and had no humanity, and I hated myself and felt regret for my actions. I didn't want to do my duty with these intentions. I came before God and prayed, "God, I always do my duty with ambition, doing things for my personal fame and status. I don't want to pursue like this anymore. I wish to repent, forsake my wrong intentions, and work with my sister to perform my duty well."

During my devotionals the next morning, I read these words of God: **"Those who are capable of putting the truth into practice can accept God's scrutiny in the things they do. When you accept God's scrutiny, your heart will be set straight. If you only ever do things for others to see, and always want to gain others' praise and admiration, and you do not accept God's scrutiny, then is God still in your heart? Such people have no God-fearing hearts. Do not always do things for your own sake**

and do not constantly consider your own interests; do not consider the interests of man, and give no thought to your own pride, reputation, and status. You must first consider the interests of God's house, and make them your priority. You should be considerate of God's will and begin by contemplating whether or not there have been impurities in the performance of your duty, whether you have been devoted, fulfilled your responsibilities, and given it your all, as well as whether or not you have been wholeheartedly thinking about your duty and the work of the church. You must consider these things. If you think about them frequently and figure them out, it will be easier for you to perform your duty well. If you are of poor caliber, if your experience is shallow, or if you are not proficient in your professional work, then there may be some mistakes or deficiencies in your work, and you may not get good results—but you will have done your best. You do not satisfy your own selfish desires or preferences. Instead, you give constant consideration to the work of the church and the interests of the house of God. Though you may not achieve good results in your duty, your heart will have been set straight; if, on top of this, you can seek the truth to solve the problems in your duty, you will be up to standard in the performance of your duty, and, at the same time, you will be able to enter into the truth reality. This is what it means to possess testimony” (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). After contemplating God's words, I found a path of practice. To perform a duty, you must let go of your own interests and consider the interests of the church. Regardless of whether your own face or status suffers, what matters is to protect the church's work and fulfill your duty. After I understood God's will, I no longer considered what others would think of me. I only thought about how to fulfill my duty well and

satisfy God. So, I shared with Audrea some of my tasks, and she very quickly agreed. Before long, Audrea's state reversed, she wasn't as idle as before, and we successfully cleared the work backlog. After this, I felt very at ease. I also truly realized how good it is to practice the truth and cooperate harmoniously in my duty.

After a while, we received a new task. I involuntarily thought, "If I take it on alone, I won't have to share the credit. With my abilities, I can do it by myself. I don't need to involve Audrea. I would look incompetent if she also participates in this task. All my brothers and sisters would laugh at me." Thinking of that, I wanted to handle it on my own. At that moment, I realized my intentions were wrong. I was still acting to serve my personal interests. I recalled God's words: **"If, in your heart, you are still fixated on prestige and status, still preoccupied with showing off and making others look up to you, then you are not someone who pursues the truth, and you are walking down the wrong path. What you pursue is not the truth, nor is it the life, but the things that you love, it is reputation, profit, and status—in which case, nothing you do relates to the truth, it is all evildoing, and rendering service"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Good Behavior Does Not Mean One's Disposition Has Changed). God's word woke me up. I always involuntarily do selfish things. I am really petty and self-interested. I hated myself for being too corrupted, and I wished to forsake my wrong intentions and practice the truth. So, I asked Audrea to participate in the new task with me. Since then, when it's time to assign tasks, I always consult with Audrea and ask her opinion, and when I want to take all the work to get all the credit, I consciously forsake myself, and based on the needs of the duty, assign tasks to Audrea. Practicing like this, I feel at peace and at ease.

Having been through this experience, I now have some understanding of my satanic disposition. I also realize that harmonious cooperation is key to fulfilling my duty well. It's simply impossible to do your duty well by yourself. Only by cooperating harmoniously can we have the Holy Spirit's guidance.

94. Leaders Mustn't Hold Talents Back

By Cecilia, Spain

In August of 2020, I was elected as a leader and was overseeing the church's video-related work. Being new to the job, I was unfamiliar with many of its principles, and ran into some difficulties while working. So I'd often seek out the team leader Sister Marsha for advice and counsel. Marsha was well acquainted with the principles and work. She was a big help to me. I noticed that she was meticulous, took her duties seriously, and had a sense of responsibility. Sometimes, when I got overloaded, I would pass off some of my work to her. We made a good team.

Later on, I gradually found that whenever brothers and sisters ran into problems, they'd all seek out Marsha and would even directly make decisions after meeting with her. I was pretty unhappy with this state of affairs. I thought to myself: "If this keeps up, won't I lose my position as leader? This won't do. In the future I'll handle all of the work assigned to me myself and not ask Marsha for help. Otherwise, the others will all think she's such a good, talented worker." One time, Marsha found that one of the brothers was making slow progress in his video production work. When she looked into it, she discovered his skills weren't up to par, and he didn't seek the principles in his duties, so work often had to be redone. She assigned another, more talented brother to help him. I didn't hear about this until later on. Marsha had made the right call, but I still felt a bit uncomfortable with the situation. I felt like it was a sign of disrespect to make such a major decision without letting me know. Was I just becoming an ornamental leader? Later on, I asked her why she hadn't informed me about this. To my surprise, she said: "I got busy and forgot to tell you." When I heard that, I lost my cool, and thought to myself: "You're gaining more and more

authority and making decisions without my approval. You don't have any respect for me! Doesn't that make it seem like the church doesn't need me? If this keeps up, what will the brothers and sisters think of me? Of course they'll think I'm useless. How could I serve as leader then?" When I realized this, my sense of panic became even more severe. Another time, Marsha told me that she had put together some study materials and was planning to get everyone together to study some skills. I felt uncomfortable when I heard this and thought: "Sometimes I'm the one reminding you to work on this stuff, and yet, when we're done talking, you're the one who gets to fellowship with and guide the others. No one knows the work I put in behind the scenes, and everyone must think you bear a greater burden than me. If this continues, how am I supposed to keep my place as leader?" Actually, I knew that it was Marsha's responsibility to lead the brothers and sisters in studies and I knew this work could not be delayed, so I shouldn't make a fuss about it. But I just didn't want to let Marsha handle this work. I thought: "Marsha is getting involved in more and more projects, including some of the work that I'm responsible for. The others prefer to go to her when they have issues. Am I going to get replaced by her soon?" The thought of all this made me pretty unhappy. So I started picking out her flaws and issues in her work. I wanted to show the others that she wasn't so skilled at her work and I was still more talented.

One day, during a discussion with an upper-level leader about our work, she casually mentioned that one of Marsha's video projects was making slow progress. This was just what I wanted to hear and I immediately replied: "That's right. She's had a lot of projects assigned to her, but she can't deal with all of them. Some of her projects haven't been very effective as well. I think it's best not to give her too much work. She shouldn't be given this much authority." Having said this, I felt a bit guilty:

How could I say something like that? Duties are God's commission. I was speaking as if I had assigned her these duties, as if I had granted her the authority to do these jobs and now I was taking it away. Wasn't I in the wrong position? I couldn't believe I could say something like that and felt quite horrified at myself. Also, some of that work really was part of Marsha's duties, but I tried to keep her from doing it and kept picking out flaws in her work. I wanted everyone to see that she wasn't a good worker and was inferior to me. How could I be so despicable?

After that, I started looking for relevant passages of God's words to resolve my state. I found a passage where God exposes antichrists that resonated with my state. God says: **“One of the most obvious characteristics of the essence of an antichrist is that they are like despots running their own dictatorship: They do not listen to anyone, they look down on everyone, and regardless of people's strengths, or what correct views or wise opinions they may express, or what suitable methods they might put forward, they pay them no heed; it is as if no one is qualified to work with them, or to take part in anything they do. This is the kind of disposition antichrists have. Some people say this is being of poor humanity—but how could it just be commonplace poor humanity? This is an entirely satanic disposition, and such a disposition is supremely fierce. Why do I say that their disposition is supremely fierce? Antichrists expropriate everything from the house of God and the property of the church, and treat them as their personal property, all of which is to be managed by them, without anyone else interfering. The only things they think about when doing the work of the church are their own interests, their own status, and their own pride. They do not allow anyone to harm their interests, much less do they allow anyone of caliber or anyone who is able to speak of their experiential**

testimony to threaten their status and prestige. ... When someone distinguishes themselves with a little work, or when someone is able to offer true experiential testimony in order to benefit, edify, and support God's chosen ones, and earns great praise from everyone, envy and hate grows in the hearts of the antichrists, and they try to alienate and suppress them. They do not, under any circumstances, allow such people to undertake any work, in order to prevent them from threatening their status. ... The antichrists think to themselves, 'There's no way I'm going to put up with this. You want to have a role in my domain, to compete with me. That's impossible; don't even think about it. You're more educated than me, more articulate than me, more popular than me, and you pursue the truth with greater diligence than I do. If I were to work alongside you and you stole my thunder, what would I do then?' Do they consider the interests of the house of God? No. What do they think about? They think only of how to hold on to their own status. Though antichrists know themselves to be incapable of doing real work, they do not cultivate or promote people of good caliber who pursue the truth; the only people they promote are those who flatter them, those who are apt to worship others, who approve of and admire them in their hearts, those who are smooth operators, who have no understanding of the truth and are incapable of discernment"

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). In the past, I always thought this passage was exposing antichrists and didn't apply to me, but then I realized that my antichrist disposition was quite severe. At first, I thought of how responsible and hardworking Marsha was, and I was happy to delegate some of my work to her, but once I realized the others admired her, went to her with many of their questions, and she went ahead with some projects

without going through me, I worried she was stealing my thunder and felt that she constituted a threat to my status, so I tried to keep her from participating in more projects, including projects that were actually a part of her duties. I was worried that if she performed well, the brothers and sisters would admire her even more and I would look worse by comparison. I even misled the upper-level leader to keep her from giving Marsha more work. Reflecting on these behaviors, I saw I really lacked humanity and was clearly excluding others to preserve my own status. Antichrists value authority above all else and never consider the work or the interests of the church. Whatever work they do, they only care about their own status and when someone is more talented than them and threatens their status, they do everything they can to suppress and exclude them and keep them from playing an important role in any duty they have responsibility over. Was my behavior any different from an antichrist? I acted like the church's work was my private property. When considering who to assign to which duties and how much work to assign them, I would always worry about whether they posed a threat to my status and reputation. I didn't put the slightest thought into how this would affect the church's work. I even suppressed and excluded people to preserve my own status, exposing my antichrist disposition. I was truly awful!

I came across this passage: **“What kind of disposition is it when a person sees someone who is better than them and they try to bring them down, spreading rumors about them, or employing despicable means to denigrate them and undermine their reputation—even trampling all over them—in order to protect their own place in people's minds? This is not just arrogance and conceitedness, it is the disposition of Satan, it is a malicious disposition. That this person can attack and alienate people who are better and stronger than them is**

insidious and evil. And that they will stop at nothing to bring people down shows that there is much of a devil in them! Living by the disposition of Satan, they are liable to belittle people, to try to stitch them up, to make things hard for them. Is this not evildoing? And living like this, they still think they're okay, that they're a good person—yet when they see someone better than them, they are liable to give them a hard time, to trample all over them. What is the issue here? Are people who are capable of committing such evil acts not unscrupulous and willful? Such people only think of their own interests, they only consider their own feelings, and all they want is to achieve their own desires, ambitions, and aims. They don't care how much damage they cause to the work of the church, and they would prefer to sacrifice the interests of the house of God to protect their status in people's minds and their own reputation. Are people like this not arrogant and self-righteous, selfish and vile? Such people are not only arrogant and self-righteous, they are also extremely selfish and vile. They are not mindful of God's will at all. Do such people have God-fearing hearts? They do not have God-fearing hearts at all. This is why they act wantonly and do whatever they want, without any sense of blame, without any trepidation, without any apprehension or worry, and without considering the consequences. This is what they often do, and how they have always behaved. What is the nature of such behavior? To put it lightly, such people are far too jealous and have too strong a desire for personal fame and status; they are too deceitful and treacherous. To put it more harshly, the essence of the problem is that such people have no God-fearing heart at all. They are not frightened of God, they believe themselves to be of utmost importance, and they regard every aspect of themselves as being higher than God and higher than the

truth. In their hearts, God is not worthy of mention and is insignificant, and God does not have any status in their hearts at all. Can those who have no place for God in their hearts, and who do not have God-fearing hearts, put the truth into practice? Absolutely not. So, when they typically go around merrily keeping themselves busy and exerting quite a lot of energy, what are they doing? Such people even claim to have abandoned everything to expend for God and suffered a great deal, but actually, the motive, principle, and objective of all their actions are for the sake of their own status and prestige, of protecting all of their interests. Would you or would you not say that this sort of person is terrible? What kind of people have believed in God for many years, yet have no God-fearing hearts? Are they not arrogant? Are they not Satan? And what things most lack a God-fearing heart? Apart from the beasts, it is the wicked and the antichrists, Satan and the devils' ilk. They don't accept the truth at all; they are entirely without a God-fearing heart. They are capable of any evil; they are the enemies of God, and the enemies of His chosen people" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of

Christ of the Last Days. The Five Conditions That Must Be Met to Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God). Reading through God's words, I felt as if He was right there judging me. There were clearly no big issues with the work Marsha oversaw, but because she posed a threat to my status, I found a way to suppress her, seizing the opportunity to disparage her in front of the upper-level leader, hoping to mislead her into giving Marsha less work so she wouldn't replace my position. I suppressed and punished others to cement my own status. Did I have a God-fearing heart? I lived by satanic toxins like "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "There can only be one alpha male," and "In all the universe, only I reign supreme." I was so selfish and arrogant. I thought of the tyrannical and autocratic CCP,

which suppresses and excludes anyone that poses a threat to its position. Was I not the same? I suppressed any brothers and sisters that were talented and effective in their work. I tried to establish my authority in the church and make the brothers and sisters only admire me and have me in their hearts. I was walking the path of an antichrist! I thought of those antichrists who used any means possible to punish and abuse people in order to maintain their status, treating those that threatened their status like thorns in their flesh, wrongfully accusing them, punishing them, and never giving up until they are expelled. After doing all kinds of evil, those antichrists ultimately were expelled from God's house. If I continued like that and failed to repent, wouldn't I ultimately meet the same fate? God has been fellowshiping on how to discern antichrists, and how to avoid walking the path of an antichrist. God has fellowshiped very clearly on this aspect of the truth, so that we will have discernment of antichrists, reflect on our own antichrist-like behaviors, and pursue the truth, repentance and transformation. But I didn't focus on resolving my own antichrist disposition in my work, didn't ponder over how best to fulfill my duties and protect the work of the church. Instead, I vied for status, treated my duty like my own personal enterprise, like a means of securing status and the admiration of my brothers and sisters, and wanted all the authority in my duty. I got carried away by my desires.

One time during devotionals, I came across two passages of God's word that were very helpful. God's words say: **"As a leader or a worker, if you always think yourself above others, and revel in your duty like some government official, always indulging in the trappings of your station, always making your own plans, always considering and enjoying your own fame and status, always running your own operation, and always seeking to gain higher status, to manage and**

control more people, and to expand the scope of your power, this is trouble. It is dangerous to treat an important duty as a chance to enjoy your position as if you are a government official. If you always act like this, not wishing to work with others, not wanting to dilute your power and share it with anyone else, not wanting anyone else to have the upper hand, to steal the limelight, if you only want to enjoy the power on your own, then you are an antichrist. But if you often seek the truth, put aside the flesh, forsake your own motivations and designs, and are able to take it upon yourself to work with others, open up your heart to consult and seek with others, attentively listen to others' ideas and suggestions, and accept advice which is correct and in line with the truth, no matter who it comes from, then you are practicing in a wise and correct manner, and you are able to avoid taking the wrong path, **which is protection for you**" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). **"No matter what you do, whether it be important or not, there should always be someone there to help you, to give you pointers, advice, or to do things in cooperation with you. This is the only way to ensure that you will do things more correctly, make fewer mistakes and be less likely to go astray—it is a good thing. Serving God, in particular, is a big deal, and not resolving your corrupt disposition could put you in danger! When people have satanic dispositions, they can rebel against and resist God in any time and at any place. People who live by satanic dispositions can deny, resist, and betray God at any time. The antichrists are very stupid, they don't realize this, they think, 'I had enough trouble getting hold of power, why would I share it with anyone else? Giving it to others means I won't have any for myself, doesn't it? How can I demonstrate my talents and abilities without power?' They do not**

know that what God has entrusted people with is not power or status, but a duty. Antichrists only accept power and status, they put their duties aside, and they don't do practical work. Instead, they only pursue fame, gain and status, and only want to seize power, control God's chosen people, and enjoy the benefits of status. Doing things this way is very dangerous—this is resisting God! Anyone who pursues fame, gain and status rather than properly performing their duty is playing with fire and playing with their life. Those who play with fire and their lives can doom themselves at any moment. Today, as a leader or a worker, you are serving God, which is no ordinary thing. You are not doing things for some person, much less working to pay bills and put food on the table; instead, you are performing your duty in the church. And given, in particular, that this duty came from God's entrustment, what does performing it imply? That you are accountable to God for your duty, whether you do it well or not; ultimately, an account must be given to God, there must be an outcome. What you have accepted is God's commission, a hallowed responsibility, so no matter how important or minor this responsibility is, it is a serious business. How serious is it? On a small scale it involves whether you can gain the truth in this lifetime and it involves how God views you. On a larger scale, it directly relates to your future and fate, to your end; if you commit evil and resist God, you will be condemned and punished. Everything you do when you perform your duty is recorded by God, and God has His own principles and standards for how it is scored and evaluated; God determines your end based on all that is manifested by you as you perform your duty” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Obey Only Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). In the past, I saw my position as a leader as a status symbol. Only

after reading God's words did I realize my duty is a commission granted to me by God. It is a responsibility and has nothing to do with status and authority. In doing one's duty in the church, there is no distinction of high or low status. Everyone fulfills their responsibilities in their own posts. After becoming a leader, I gained many opportunities to practice, and I was gradually learning how to act according to principles and coming to understand some truths. God also assigned talented brothers and sisters who understood principles to work with me so that I could perform at my very best in my duties, and do the church's work well. But I didn't pursue the truth or work harmoniously with others. Instead, I cherished status and even suppressed and excluded others to keep my status, robbing my brothers and sisters of the chance to practice. I'd not only harmed my brothers and sisters, but also impacted the work of the church. Given all my behaviors, I really wasn't fit to be a leader. I didn't want to keep going down this mistaken road. I just wanted to honestly and practically carry out my responsibilities, to fulfill my duties. After that, I started to apply myself more in performing my duty and when I saw the others going to Marsha with questions, I didn't feel quite as bad anymore, and stopped worrying that they'd look up to her instead of me. I only thought of how best to work with Marsha to fulfill our duties. When I noticed Marsha having problems in her work, I would communicate with her and help her get back on track. When certain projects were progressing slowly, I would discuss with her how to increase efficiency. If I lacked insight or didn't know how to handle a certain issue, I would also seek her out for fellowship. As time went on, we began working better and better together and I felt so grounded and free.

I also thought of this passage of God's words: **“As a church leader, you do not merely need to learn to use the truth to resolve problems, you also need to learn to discover and cultivate people of talent, whom**

you absolutely must not envy or suppress. Practicing in this way is beneficial to the work of the church. If you can cultivate a few pursuers of the truth to cooperate with you and do all the work well, and in the end, you all have experiential testimonies, then you are a qualified leader or worker. If you are able to handle everything according to the principles, then you are committing your devotion. Some people always fear that others are better than they are or above them, that other people will be recognized while they get overlooked, and this leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being envious of people with talent? Is that not selfish and contemptible? What kind of disposition is this? It is maliciousness! Those who only think about their own interests, who only satisfy their own selfish desires, without thinking about others or considering the interests of God's house, have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them. If you are truly capable of showing consideration for God's will, you will be able to treat other people fairly. If you recommend a good person and allow them to undergo training and fulfill a duty, thereby adding a person of talent to God's house, will that not make your work easier? Will you not then be showing devotion in your duty? That is a good deed before God; it is the minimum conscience and sense that those who serve as leaders should possess" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). From God's words, I knew that cultivating talents is the responsibility of a leader and is the need of the work of the church. This experience helped me realize how meaningful this work really is. In one way, it's beneficial for the overall work of the church, allowing more people to put their talents to play in fulfilling their duties, and advancing the work of the church even more. In another way, it also gives the brothers and sisters more practice, which

benefits their life entry. These are all good deeds and will be commemorated by God. Thinking back, Marsha had been a big help to me. She helped me grasp some principles and make some progress and our work went along much more smoothly. I saw how crucial it is to follow God's demands and learn to work with others to fulfill duties. Only in this way can we do the work of the church and fulfill our duties well.

Through this experience, I gained some understanding of my satanic disposition and fallacious views, and was able to let go of my desire for name and status and fulfill my duty. This was God's salvation for me. Thanks be to God!

95. How to Handle Being Pruned and Dealt With

By Rosalie, South Korea

Wednesday, August 17, 2022, Clear skies

I've started on a new duty today. I'm doing textual work. Though unexpected, I'm happy to be able to do this duty. I know that this is God's grace and that He's giving me a chance to practice. I want to do a good job. But I am so unfamiliar with this work, and furthermore, I've learned that others have been pruned and dealt with for being willful and unprincipled in this type of work, so I start to worry, thinking: "Will I be pruned and dealt with in this duty, too? But then again, wouldn't this be a good thing if I could learn lessons from being pruned? This is a great opportunity to gain the truth!"

Sunday, September 4, 2022, Cloudy

How time flies. In the blink of an eye, I've been doing textual work for over half a month. With the leader's fellowship on principles and guidance on work, I have become a little more familiar with this work and learned some principles. But when I saw some brothers and sisters being dealt with for not doing their duty with principles and being willful, I got quite nervous, afraid of being dealt with myself. Though I know the leader's pruning is pointing out corrupt dispositions and the essence of problems in line with God's word, and that this helps us know ourselves and enter into the truth principles, I still don't want to be pruned or dealt with. Brother Saul was dealt with today for not doing his duty in line with principles. The leader had fellowshipped and redressed this with him repeatedly, but he kept making the same mistake. The leader said he lacked spiritual understanding and that he didn't understand principles. Though these words weren't

directed at me, when I heard the words “lacked spiritual understanding,” it kind of felt like it touched a nerve. I warned myself: “I have to act according to principles, and I can’t make any mistakes, or I’ll be dealt with. I’ll be in trouble if I’m shown to have no spiritual understanding. How can a person like that be saved? Are they even worth cultivating?” These thoughts just made me more anxious. Doing my duty this evening, I was tense the whole time. I did things with the utmost caution, terrified of slipping up. But I don’t understand why other people being dealt with is having such an effect on me.

Friday, September 9, 2022, Clear skies

Lately I’ve been filled with apprehension in my duty and constantly looking over my shoulder. I’m terrified of slipping up. Sometimes others will ask for my point of view, but even when I have views that I am certain are in line with principles, I’m scared to say the wrong thing. I have to reach out and gain several other people’s approval before stating my view. To be honest, doing my duty like this is so tiring, and I feel like I’ve grown distant from God. I read a passage of God’s word that really touched me today. God says: **“Some antichrists that work in the house of God silently resolve to act scrupulously, to avoid making errors, being pruned and dealt with, angering the Above or being caught by their leader doing something bad, and they make sure to have an audience when they do good deeds. Yet, no matter how scrupulous they are, due to the fact that their motives and the path they take are incorrect, and because they speak and act only for the sake of reputation and status and never seek the truth, they often violate principles, disrupt and disturb the church’s work, act as Satan’s lackeys and even often commit transgressions. It is very common for such people to often violate principles and commit transgressions. So, of course, it is**

difficult for them to avoid being pruned and dealt with. They have seen that some antichrists have been exposed and cast out because they have been sternly pruned and dealt with. They have seen these things with their own eyes. Why do antichrists act so cautiously? One reason, for sure, is that they are afraid of being exposed and cast out. They think, ‘I’ve got to be careful—after all, “Caution is the parent of safety” and “The good have peaceful lives.” I must follow these principles and remind myself at every moment to avoid doing wrong or getting into trouble, and I must suppress my corruption and intentions and not let anyone see them. As long as I don’t do wrong and can persevere to the very end, I will gain blessings, evade the disasters, and I will be successful in my belief in God!’ They often urge themselves on, motivate and encourage themselves in this way. They believe that if they do wrong, they will significantly lessen their chances of gaining blessings. Is this not the calculation and belief that occupies the depths of their hearts? Putting aside whether this calculation or belief of antichrists is right or wrong, based on this belief, what will they be most worried about when being dealt with and pruned? (Their prospects and fate.) They associate being dealt with and pruned with their prospects and fate—this has to do with their evil nature” (The Word, Vol. 4.

Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). This passage describes my state exactly. When I see others being dealt with, I don’t accept it as being from God or seek why these people are being dealt with, how they have deviated, how I can learn from their failures, and how I should avoid deviating in the same way in the future to act in line with principles. Instead, I draw an invisible yet intimate link between being dealt with and my fate. I feel that the more seriously you are dealt with, the less hope you have of being blessed. I’ve become more guarded and cautious, thinking that as long as I don’t make

many mistakes or get dealt with, I have hope of being blessed. Because of my misunderstandings about being dealt with and because I value blessings too much, I'm highly sensitive to things that touch on my fate and overcautious in everything I do. I'm afraid that if I'm not cautious, I'll be dealt with and lose my good outcome. I can see that I'm so deceitful! The leader fellowships principles with us many times and takes us by the hand, but we don't take his words seriously. We go on to act willfully and blindly, and disrupt the work. Isn't dealing with us a totally normal thing to do? A rational person would reflect on themselves in light of this, on where they are falling short or lack spiritual understanding, and seek the truth and promptly amend their deviations. This is a person with positive entry and who seeks the truth. We are dealt with to help us enter the truth and do our duties well. But not only do I not seek the truth or reflect, I'm also guarded and misunderstanding. I can't tell good from bad! Thanks to the revelation of God's word, now I have some understanding of my state.

Monday, September 12, 2022, Heavy rain

During a gathering today, the leader learned that Saul had become negative after being dealt with, and that he felt constrained and repressed. The leader asked us if we felt constrained. I recalled my recent state and said that I had felt somewhat constrained. The leader then gave some fellowship that really touched me. He said: "Why is it that some people are dealt with repeatedly and yet still don't gain truth, and say they feel constrained, oppressed, and pained? It is because they don't focus on understanding or gaining the truth, meaning they don't gain anything. They get resistant and angry when dealt with. They go up against others. Is this a person that accepts the truth? Really, these people are dealt with because they have violated the truth principles, but they refuse to reflect, and even slack off. This shows they don't accept the truth, and that they go against

and are at odds with the truth. To be at odds with the truth is, in essence, to be at odds with God. The nature of this is very serious.” The leader’s fellowship finally made me realize how serious the nature of rejecting the truth or being dealt with is, and how dangerous this state is. When I got home, I felt deeply unsettled for a long time and lay in bed unable to sleep for ages. I’ve started to wonder, “How exactly not accepting the truth manifests? How can I learn a lesson and reflect in this situation?”

Wednesday, September 14, 2022, Clear skies

Saul was dismissed today. A few others were also dismissed because they didn’t accept the truth and weren’t making progress in their duties. I found out from a sister that Saul would often do his duty willfully and violate principles, and that the leader patiently fellowshiped on principles with him each time. Sometimes he would prune him and point out the essence of his problem, but Saul didn’t seek the truth or reflect. In response to being pruned, he’d slack off and refuse to share his views in work discussions. One time in a gathering, he even said: “The leader doesn’t see when I do a good job, but I get dealt with if I don’t.” It was hard to believe that he’d said this, and the fact that he could showed he didn’t accept the truth at all! I read a few passages of God’s word: **“When an antichrist is pruned and dealt with, the first thing they do is resist and reject it deep in their heart. They fight it. And why is that? This is because antichrists, by their very nature essence, are sick of and hate the truth, and they do not accept the truth at all. Naturally, an antichrist’s essence and disposition prevent them from acknowledging their own mistakes or acknowledging their own corrupt disposition. Based on these two facts, an antichrist’s attitude toward being pruned and dealt with is to reject and oppose it, completely and utterly. They detest and resist it from the bottom of their heart, and have not the slightest hint**

of acceptance or submission, much less any genuine reflection or repentance. When an antichrist is pruned and dealt with, no matter who does it, what it pertains to, the degree to which they are to blame for the matter, how blatant the error, how much wickedness they commit, or what consequences their wickedness creates for the church—the antichrist doesn’t consider any of this. To an antichrist, the one pruning and dealing with them is singling them out, or deliberately finding faults to punish them. The antichrist may even think that they are being bullied and humiliated, that they are not being treated humanely, and that they are being belittled and scorned. After an antichrist is pruned and dealt with, they never reflect on what it was that they have actually done wrong, what sort of corrupt disposition they have revealed, whether they sought the principles in the matter, or whether they acted in accordance with the truth principles or fulfilled their responsibilities. They do not examine themselves or reflect on any of this, nor do they ponder these issues. Instead, they approach dealing and pruning according to their own will and with hot-headedness. Any time an antichrist is pruned and dealt with, they will be full of anger, resentment, and discontent, and will listen to advice from no one. They refuse to accept their being pruned and dealt with, and are unable to come back before God to learn about and reflect on themselves, to address their actions that violate the principles, such as being perfunctory or careless or running amok in their duty, nor do they use this chance to resolve their own corrupt disposition. Instead, they find excuses to defend themselves, to vindicate themselves, and they will even say things to provoke discord and incite others” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Twelve: They Want to Retreat When There Is No Status and No Hope of Gaining Blessings). **“Regardless of the environments that crop up—**

especially in the face of adversity, and especially when God reveals or exposes people—the first thing one should do is to come before God to reflect and examine their words and deeds and their corrupt disposition, instead of examining, studying, and judging whether God’s words and actions are right or wrong. If you stay in your proper position, you should know exactly what it is you ought to be doing. People have a corrupt disposition and do not understand the truth. This is not such a big problem. But when people have a corrupt disposition and do not understand the truth, yet still do not seek the truth—now they have a real problem. You have a corrupt disposition and do not understand the truth, and you can judge God arbitrarily, and approach and interact with Him as your mood, preferences, and emotions dictate. However, if you do not seek and practice the truth, things are not going to be so simple. Not only will you not be able to submit to God, but you could misunderstand and complain about Him, condemn Him, oppose Him, and even scold and reject Him in your heart, saying that He is not righteous, that not everything He does is necessarily right. Is it not dangerous that you may yet give rise to such things? (It is.) It is very dangerous. Not seeking the truth can cost one their life! And this can happen at any time and at any place” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Ten: They Despise the Truth, Publicly Flout Principles, and Ignore the Arrangements of God’s House (Part Three)). **“For everyone who is often passive, this is caused by the inability to accept the truth. If you do not accept the truth, passivity will haunt you like a demon, causing you to live in a perpetual state of passiveness and develop a feeling of disobedience, dissatisfaction and resentment toward God. When it gets to the point that you start resisting, rebelling and shouting out against God, you will have reached the end. When people start exposing, dissecting and**

branding you, you will have realized the grim reality of the situation far too late and will fall to the ground, beating your breast. Then, all you can do is await God's punishment!" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (17)). God's words finally made me understand that the clearest indicator of whether a person accepts the truth is how they handle being dealt with. When dealt with, those who pursue and accept the truth can reflect, and no matter how severely they have been dealt with, they can always pray to God, consider where exactly they went wrong, what caused this, and what corrupt disposition they revealed, then seek the truth and learn from it. Though there may be some negativity and weakness, this is because they see the depth of their corruption and the severity of their transgressions, they start to feel guilty and repentant, and thereby hate themselves from their hearts. But they won't get stuck in negativity. They will seek the truth and continue reflecting on themselves from these failures, and when they truly know their problem and see the nature of their actions clearly, they see God's love and protection within being dealt with, and they thank God. In this moment a person's state is correct and positive. But a person who doesn't accept the truth takes being dealt with differently. Though some won't openly complain, they never self-reflect or know themselves by God's word. Within themselves, they argue, resist, and make excuses. The more they think about it, the more aggrieved and pained they feel, even to the point of feeling wronged. Naturally, this creates negative emotions. These negative emotions contain their dissatisfaction with reality and with others. Those who accept the truth find that being dealt with lets them truly know their corrupt disposition, repent, and change, and that it is a turning point in their faith. But those who don't accept the truth will be exposed and cast out. All those who become negative a lot do not accept the truth, are by nature sick

of the truth, and cannot advance no matter their years of faith. When dealt with, Saul did not reflect or recognize the nature and consequences of working willfully, much less seek principles of practice. Instead, he was constrained, negative, and listless. At first I thought it was normal to feel down after being dealt with and he'd be fine after a couple days of reflection. But some of the other brothers and sisters said that he'd been like this before—zealous and active on the outside, but as soon as problems surfaced in work and he was dealt with, he'd become negative and listless, and stop contributing to discussions on problems. He'd say the more work suggestions he made, the more issues were exposed, and that he'd offer fewer suggestions and opinions, so fewer issues would be exposed. With his most recent pruning, he felt constrained and repressed in his duty, and also depressed and pained. This negative attitude of his is essentially rejecting the truth, and blaming and resisting God. He has been revealing an antichrist disposition. I've finally realized that behind this negativity hides a satanic disposition that resists God. Isn't Saul taking the wrong path a wakeup call for me? This became particularly apparent when I read it said in God's word, **“Not seeking the truth can cost one their life! And this can happen at any time and at any place”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Ten: They Despise the Truth, Publicly Flout Principles, and Ignore the Arrangements of God's House (Part Three)). I didn't have much personal experience with this before, but with what I've gone through lately, these words make my heart ring with assent. It's so dangerous to not seek or accept the truth when dealt with. The brothers and sisters dismissed recently were in fact gifted, but their fatal weakness was being sick of and not seeking the truth, leading to them never getting results in their duties and being dismissed in the end. The more I think about it, the more I see the importance of seeking the truth.

Thursday, September 15, 2022, Light rain

The leader's fellowship from that night has been running through my head for a couple days, and my thoughts keep coming back to these words of God: **"If you have faith in God, yet seek not the truth or the will of God, nor love the way that brings you closer to God, then I say that you are one who is trying to evade judgment, and that you are a puppet and a traitor who flees from the great white throne"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Christ Does the Work of Judgment With the Truth). Before, when I read God's words: **"you are one who is trying to evade judgment,"** and **"you are a puppet and a traitor who flees from the great white throne,"** those in the religious world who cling to religious notions immediately came to mind. They just want to be saved through grace. They refuse to accept God's judgment work in the last days. They are puppets and traitors fleeing from God's great white throne. But I wonder, "Does accepting God's work in the last days also mean accepting His judgment? Is that how God sees it? What does it really mean to truly accept God's judgment and chastisement?" By pondering God's word, I realized accepting God's work in the last days does not mean truly accepting His judgment in the last days. You must at least be able to accept being dealt with to accept God's judgment in the last days. If you can't accept being dealt with, there's no way you'll accept God's judgment and chastisement. I read some more of God's word on how to correctly handle being dealt with. Almighty God says: **"When it comes to being pruned and dealt with, what is the very least that people should know? Being pruned and dealt with must be experienced to adequately perform one's duty—it is indispensable. It is something that people must face on a daily basis and often experience in their faith in God and attainment of salvation. No one can be apart from being pruned and dealt with. Is pruning and dealing with**

someone something that involves their future and fate? (No.) So what is pruning and dealing with someone for? Is it in order to condemn people? (No, it's helping people understand the truth and perform their duty according to principles.) That's right. That's the most correct understanding of it. Pruning and dealing with someone is a kind of discipline, a kind of chastening, but it's also a form of helping and saving people. Being pruned and dealt with allows you to alter your incorrect pursuit in time. It allows you to promptly recognize the problems you currently have, and allows you to recognize the corrupt dispositions you expose in time. No matter what, being pruned and dealt with helps you recognize your mistakes and fulfill your duties according to principles, it saves you from making mistakes and going astray in time, and it prevents you from causing catastrophes. Is this not the greatest aid to people, their greatest remedy? Those with a conscience and reason should be able to treat being dealt with and pruned correctly" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). God's word is very clear on the correct attitude and path of practice we should have toward being dealt with. In fact, being dealt with is completely unrelated to our fate. No matter if the language used is harsh, distressing, or even condemning, it is all to help us recognize our corruption and see the deviations in our work. It is to help us seek the truth and do our duties with principles. Being dealt with often or severely doesn't mean a person doesn't have a good fate, nor does not being dealt with mean a person will have a good fate. Though some may be pruned and dealt with often, and sometimes this may be severe, poignant, or seem like exposure or condemnation, these people are later able to seek the truth, reflect, and gain some understanding of their corrupt disposition, shortcomings, and deviations. They are able to change and grow in life, and in the end, they

can still shoulder important work. I've started to think back on my attitude toward being dealt with since becoming a believer. I've believed in God for nine years, and in all these years, I've rarely been dealt with or had major setbacks or failures. I've always held a different view of being dealt with. I've felt being dealt with is a bad thing, that it's the same as being exposed or condemned. I shrink in fear at the sight of others being dealt with, afraid that it will happen to me too if I'm not careful. I've mistaken being dealt with for condemnation and exposure, rejecting and resisting it, wanting to stay in my comfort zone in my faith. How is my pursuit any different from those who just want their fill of bread in religion? I have read so much of God's word and I clearly know that His work in the last days aims to cleanse and perfect man with judgment, refinement, pruning and dealing. But I have no real knowledge and am unwilling to accept being dealt with or refined, so no matter how many years I believe in God, I won't make any progress. I won't gain the truth or attain change in my life disposition, and in the end, I will be punished. The more I think about it, the more I realize how dangerous my state is. I crave comfort and pursue grace, so even if I am not dealt with, it doesn't mean I'll have a good outcome. If I never seek the truth or change my corrupt disposition, I won't be saved in the end. It's not that being dealt with reveals a person's outcome, but that their attitude toward the truth reveals who they are. I'd always thought being dealt with was a bad thing, and that it was perhaps God's displeasure or condemnation. But now I see how distorted my view was! In tears, I prayed to God: "God, I finally see my ignorance and foolishness. In my years of faith, I have never sought the truth and my nature has been sick of the truth. I have always evaded being pruned and dealt with. God, I want to repent. I am willing to learn lessons from being dealt with." I felt much more at ease

after praying, along with a sense of yearning and longing. I hope that I can experience being pruned and dealt with so I can progress in life.

Wednesday, October 5, 2022, Cloudy

Something unforgettable happened today. While working on a project, because I was doing my duty willfully and not seeking principles, work had to be redone, which delayed progress. The leader pointed out the nature of this problem and dealt with me for being arrogant and lacking in caliber. He said this showed my lack of spiritual understanding. His words kept running through my mind. I was very upset and started to delimit myself, thinking: "The leader's seen right through me. He thinks I'm not suited for this duty. I'll be dismissed any day now." I got more and more depressed. Realizing my state was wrong, I prayed to God: "Oh God, I was dealt with today. I don't know what I should learn from this or how to reflect on myself. Please enlighten and guide me to know myself and cast off these negative emotions." After praying I remembered that seeking the truth is key when dealt with. What is being negative going to solve? I should reflect on what exactly my problems are and how I lacked spiritual understanding. Calmly giving it some thought, I realized that I was mainly dealt with this time because I was doing my duty willfully, without pondering or seeking principles. The leader had fellowshiped on principles related to this, but I just stuck to rules. I even felt that having heard these principles several times, I'd already mastered them and didn't need to work on them anymore. I blindly believed in myself, put principles aside, saw my opinions as correct and didn't seek opinions from others. I was too willful, didn't act according to principles, and blindly followed rules. Wasn't this having no spiritual understanding? If I hadn't been dealt with this way, I would stay numb, thinking I had done my duty well, truly not knowing what evil I might commit. Being dealt with is a warning to me and it is protection for

me. Now that I see this, I don't feel negative anymore. I can focus on seeking with principles, and remind myself not to make these kinds of mistakes again.

Saturday, October 8, 2022, Clear skies

We were in a gathering with the leader today. He patiently fellowshiped on the principles of doing a duty with us and then asked if we had made any gains lately. He encouraged us to pursue the truth, and that no matter the circumstances, learning lessons is most important. He also read us a passage of God's word: **"In the course of experiencing the work of God, no matter how many times you have failed, fallen down, been pruned, dealt with, or exposed, these are not bad things. Regardless of how you have been pruned or dealt with, or whether it is by leaders, workers, or your brothers or sisters, these are all good things. You must remember this: No matter how much you suffer, you are actually benefiting. Anyone with experience can attest to this. No matter what, being pruned, dealt with, or exposed is always a good thing. It is not a condemnation. It is God's salvation and the best opportunity for you to get to know yourself. It can bring your life experience a change of gears. Without it, you will possess neither the opportunity, the condition, nor the context to be able to reach an understanding of the truth of your corruption. If you truly understand the truth, and are able to unearth the corrupt things hidden in the depths of your heart, if you can clearly distinguish them, then this is good, this has solved a major problem of life entry, and is of great benefit to changes in disposition. Becoming able to truly know yourself is the best opportunity for you to mend your ways and become a new person; it is the best opportunity for you to obtain new life. Once you truly know yourself, you will be able to see that when the truth becomes one's life,**

it is a precious thing indeed, and you will thirst for the truth, practice the truth, and enter into reality. This is such a great thing! If you can grab this opportunity and earnestly reflect upon yourself and gain a genuine knowledge of yourself whenever you fail or fall down, then in the midst of negativity and weakness, you will be able to stand back up. Once you have crossed this threshold, you will then be able to take a big step forward and enter the truth reality” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of

Christ of the Last Days. To Gain the Truth, One Must Learn From the People, Matters, and Things Nearby). God’s words really moved me and I couldn’t hold back the tears. Though being dealt with was upsetting and painful and it sometimes felt like I was going to collapse with negativity, this experience has really made me see God’s love. It was this kind of situation that forced me to come before God to reflect and know my own corrupt disposition, and to reflect on where my problems lie. When I gain some understanding of myself, I feel a sense of inner peace and ease. If I hadn’t been dealt with, I don’t know what disturbances I would have created in my duty, or what problems or oversights would have emerged. It was being dealt with like this that made me pay closer attention to seeking principles in my duty. I’ve personally seen that being dealt with is inseparable from doing our duty.

96. The Path to an Honest Appearance

By Daisy, South Korea

At the beginning of 2021, I was elected as team leader responsible for several teams' watering work. At the time I thought that being elected to that position meant I had some caliber and capability, that I was ahead of most of the brothers and sisters in my understanding of the truth and life entry. I felt like I needed to equip myself with the truth and put my heart into doing my duty well, so everyone would see that I was capable of doing that work.

At first I wasn't familiar with the work, so when things came up that I couldn't fully grasp, I'd ask the leader or brothers and sisters I worked with about them. I figured that since I was new to that work, everyone would understand that there would be some things I didn't know, and doing more seeking might help me grow more quickly. That way, I'd leave a good impression on everyone, and they'd think I earnestly sought the truth. But, later, I kept running into lots of problems, and was hesitant to keep asking. By that point I'd been in that duty for quite some time, so what would everyone think of me if I constantly asked so many questions? Would they think my caliber wasn't very good, that I couldn't even solve simple problems, and I wasn't capable in that work as team leader? So when I ran into other problems that I couldn't fully grasp, I couldn't stop thinking about whether these questions were worth asking, whether it was reasonable to ask them. I was worried my thinking would seem simplistic. For some problems that didn't seem complicated, I wouldn't ask, instead I'd try to figure them out myself. As a result, more and more issues piled up, and quite a few weren't resolved in time. This made me increasingly anxious that everyone wouldn't think I was a good fit for team leader. During

gatherings, especially when my leader was present, while I fellowshiped on God's words, I was constantly worrying: "Is my fellowship practical? Is my understanding pure?" After my fellowship, I'd observe everyone's reactions, and if someone expanded on the basis of what I'd said, that meant my fellowship had struck a chord, that it contained enlightenment, and it also showed I had a pure understanding of God's words and could handle the work. But if no one responded when I was done, I'd feel really upset. After some time, my duty started to feel really exhausting. In every word I said and every opinion I expressed, I would always put way too much thought into it, and I couldn't relax. I'd wanted to perform the duty well, but I was always on tenterhooks, and I wasn't growing or learning anything.

I came before God in prayer and seeking, and read a passage of His words: **"People themselves are created beings. Can created beings achieve omnipotence? Can they achieve perfection and flawlessness? Can they achieve proficiency in everything, come to understand everything, see through everything, and be capable of everything? They cannot. However, within humans, there are corrupt dispositions, and a fatal weakness: As soon as they learn a skill or profession, people feel that they are capable, that they are people with status and worth, and that they are professionals. No matter how unexceptional they are, they all want to package themselves as some famous or exceptional individual, to turn themselves into some minor celebrity, and make people think they are perfect and flawless, without a single defect; in the eyes of others, they wish to become famous, powerful, or some great figure, and they want to become mighty, capable of anything, with nothing they cannot do. They feel that if they sought others' help, they would appear incapable, weak, and inferior, and that people would look down on them. For this reason, they always want to keep up a**

front. Some people, when asked to do something, say they know how to do it, when they actually do not. Afterward, in secret, they look it up and try to learn how to do it, but after studying it for several days, they still do not understand how to do it. When asked how they are getting on with it, they say, 'Soon, soon!' But in their hearts, they're thinking, 'I'm not there yet, I have no idea, I don't know what to do! I must not let the cat out of the bag, I must continue putting on a front, I can't let people see my shortcomings and ignorance, I can't let them look down on me!' What problem is this? This is a living hell of trying to save face at all costs. What kind of disposition is this? Such people's arrogance knows no bounds, they have lost all sense. They do not wish to be like everyone else, they don't want to be ordinary people, normal people, but superhumans, exceptional individuals, or hotshots. This is such a huge problem! With regard to the weaknesses, shortcomings, ignorance, foolishness, and lack of understanding within normal humanity, they will wrap it all up, and not let other people see it, and then keep on disguising themselves. ... Do such people not live with their heads in the clouds? Are they not dreaming? They do not know who they themselves are, nor do they know how to live out normal humanity. They have never once acted like practical human beings. If you pass your days with your head in the clouds, muddling through, not doing anything with your feet on the ground, always living by your own imagination, then this is trouble. The path in life you choose is not **right**" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five Conditions That Must Be Met to Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God). Thinking this over gave me a little understanding of my state. I had thought too much of myself, feeling like being elected as team leader meant I had a certain caliber and work capability. When I saw myself that way, I started caring about what

everyone else thought of me, and I wanted to prove that I was up to the task as soon as possible. So, when more problems and difficulties came up in my duty, I couldn't simply bring them up, and was always worried people would see through me, saying I lacked caliber and wasn't up to the job. I started putting up appearances, keeping quiet when problems came up and figuring things out on my own. That led to many problems in my duty not getting taken care of, which both held up our work and impacted my own state. I lost clarity in my thinking, and started getting confused over things I had previously understood. I even kept second-guessing my fellowship in gatherings, afraid everyone would look down on me if it wasn't any good. I felt constrained at every turn. I realized that all of this was entirely my fault. I was so arrogant and unreasonable, and couldn't properly face my own flaws and shortcomings. I was always putting on an act so others would think highly of me. In fact, that duty was a chance given to me by the church to train myself, and by no means did it signify that I understood the truth or could do the job well. I just had a little comprehension ability, but there were lots of things I couldn't understand and didn't have any personal experience with. There was absolutely nothing special about me, but I'd thought so highly of myself, pretending to be lofty, someone who understands the truth. I overestimated myself so much! I should just keep my feet on the ground and carry out my duty, asking others when I didn't understand something, which was the realistic and reasonable thing to do.

I read a passage of God's words that gave some practical approaches. God says: **"You must seek the truth to resolve any problem that arises, no matter what it is, and by no means disguise yourself or put on a false face for others. Your shortcomings, your deficiencies, your faults, your corrupt dispositions—be completely open about them all, and fellowship about them all. Do not keep them inside. Learning how to**

open yourself up is the first step toward life entry, and it is the first hurdle, which is the most difficult to overcome. Once you have overcome it, entering the truth is easy. What does taking this step signify? It means that you are opening your heart and showing everything you have, good or bad, positive or negative; baring yourself for others and for God to see; hiding nothing from God, concealing nothing, disguising nothing, free of deceit and trickery, and being likewise open and honest with other people. In this way, you live in the light, and not only will God scrutinize you, but other people will also be able to see that you act with principle and a degree of transparency. You do not need to use any methods to protect your reputation, image, and status, nor do you need to cover up or disguise your mistakes. You do not need to engage in these useless efforts. If you can let these things go, you will be very relaxed, you will live without shackles or pain, and you will live entirely in the light” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the

Last Days. Part Three). Thinking over this helped me realize that to be relaxed and anxiety-free in my duty, the first step was to learn to open up about my faults and stop putting up appearances. I had to practice the truth and be an honest person. I was just a corrupt person who hardly understood the truth, so of course there were many matters I couldn't fully grasp. That was perfectly normal. There was no need to put on an act and cover anything up for the sake of my own image. If I had questions I should let go of my pride, and openly seek guidance and fellowship about them; this was the only way to relax in my duty. At this realization, my heart brightened and I started focusing on practicing in this way. When I wasn't sure about something, I proactively asked about it, and when sharing my opinion, I said what I truly thought and only fellowshiped on what I knew. When I practiced in this way, I gradually started understanding some of the things I

never had before, and I was able to discover and amend errors in my duty. I also gained a better understanding of my shortcomings. I had finally realized that being seen for what I am is a good thing, that it helps to understand truth principles and discover my own flaws. I felt much freer at this point, and later I was able to do my duty normally.

Before long, the groups I was responsible for were doing really well in church life, and the brothers and sisters wanted to fellowship with me on their problems. But without realizing it, I'd started focusing on what people thought of me again. One time at a co-workers' meeting, my leader brought up some problems that had occurred at our church, and asked us what we thought. I was thinking, "So many brothers and sisters are here, and if I could come up with some unique insights, that would show how capable I am." But after thinking long and hard, I still couldn't make sense of it. Just then, my leader asked me what I thought. I stammered for ages, then just gave a vague suggestion. Pretty soon after, two other sisters shared their thinking, and their suggestions were the opposite of mine. What they said was really well-reasoned, and the leader agreed with them. I immediately felt upset, thinking not only had I failed to make myself look good, instead I'd embarrassed myself. What would my leader think of me? Would she think that I didn't have any insight into such a simple thing, that I hadn't grown at all? Over the next few days, some issues came up in each of the groups I was responsible for. I didn't understand them, so I should have sought help right away. But then I wondered, if I asked all those questions, wouldn't it seem like I wasn't capable in my work? Wouldn't it ruin the good image I'd built up? On the other hand, I knew unresolved problems would hinder our work, so I came up with a makeshift strategy: I'd divide up my questions and ask different people, so the problems would get resolved but I wouldn't look like I was asking too many questions and

didn't know anything. As I put up appearances this way, my state deteriorated more and more. My thinking became more clouded and I started struggling in lots of things. Then I reflected, and saw that since I didn't have insight into some things I previously did, it must have been a problem with my state. So I came before God and prayed, "God, I clearly have problems, but I don't dare be honest and open up about my faults. I always want to act big. Why is it so hard to ask when I don't understand something? It is as if my lips were sealed shut. Doing my duty this way is exhausting. Please guide me to know my corruption and to change."

After that I read a couple passages of God's words that exposed my state perfectly. Almighty God says: **"Corrupt human beings are good at disguising themselves. No matter what they do or what corruption they put on display, they always have to disguise themselves. If something goes wrong or they do something wrong, they want to put the blame on others. They want credit for good things to go to themselves, and blame for bad things to go to others. Is there not a lot of disguising like this in real life? There is too much. Making mistakes or disguising oneself: which of these relates to disposition? Disguising is a matter of disposition, it involves an arrogant disposition, evil, and treachery; it is especially disdained by God. ... If you do not try to put on a pretense or justify yourself, if you can admit your mistakes, everyone will say you are honest and wise. And what makes you wise? Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone has faults and flaws. And actually, everyone has the same corrupt disposition. Do not think yourself more noble, perfect, and kind than others; that is being utterly unreasonable. Once people's corrupt dispositions and the essence and true face of their corruption are clear to you, you will not try to cover up your own mistakes, nor will you hold other people's mistakes against them—you will be able to**

face both correctly. Only then will you become insightful and not do foolish things, which will make you wise. Those who are not wise are foolish people, and they always dwell on their minor mistakes while sneaking around behind the scenes. It is disgusting to witness. In fact, what you are doing is immediately obvious to other people, yet you are still blatantly putting on a show. To others, it has the appearance of a clownish performance. Is this not foolish? It really is. Foolish people do not have any wisdom. No matter how many sermons they hear, they still do not understand the truth or see anything for what it really is. They never get off their high horse, thinking they are different from everyone else and more respectable; this is arrogance and self-righteousness, this is foolishness. Fools do not have spiritual understanding, do they? The matters in which you are foolish and unwise are the matters in which you have no spiritual understanding, and cannot easily understand the truth. This is the reality of the **matter**” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One’s Conduct). “**What kind of disposition is it when people always put up a front, always whitewash themselves, always put on airs so that others think highly of them, and cannot see their faults or shortcomings, when they always try to present their best side to people? This is arrogance, fakery, hypocrisy, it is the disposition of Satan, it is something evil. Take members of the satanic regime: No matter how much they fight, feud, or kill in the dark, no one is allowed to report or expose them. They are afraid that people will see their demonic face, and they do everything they can to cover it up. In public, they do their utmost to whitewash themselves, saying how much they love the people, how great, glorious and infallible they are. This is the nature of Satan. The most prominent feature of Satan’s nature is trickery and**

deception. And what is the aim of this trickery and deception? To hoodwink people, to stop them from seeing its essence and true colors, and thus achieve the aim of prolonging its rule. Ordinary people may lack such power and status, but they, too, wish to make others hold a favorable view of them, and for people to have a high estimation of them, and elevate them to a high status in their hearts. This is a corrupt disposition, and if people do not understand the truth, they are incapable of recognizing this. Corrupt dispositions are the hardest of all to recognize: Recognizing your own faults and shortcomings is easy, but recognizing your own corrupt disposition is not. People who do not know themselves never talk about their corrupt states—they always think that they are okay. And without realizing it, they start to show off: ‘Through all my years of faith, I have undergone so much persecution and suffered so much hardship. Do you know how I overcame it all?’ Is this an arrogant disposition? What is the motivation behind putting themselves on display? (To make people think highly of them.) What is their motive in making people think highly of them? (To be given status in such people’s minds.) When you are given status in the mind of someone else, then when they are in your company, they are deferential toward you, and especially polite when they talk to you. They always look up to you, they always let you go first in all things, they give way to you, and they flatter and obey you. In all things, they seek you out and let you make decisions. And you get a sense of enjoyment from this—you feel that you are stronger and better than anyone else. Everyone likes this feeling. This is the feeling of having status in someone’s heart; people wish to indulge in this. This is why people vie for status, and all wish to be given status in others’ hearts, to be esteemed and worshiped by others. If they could not

derive such enjoyment from it, they would not pursue status” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One’s Conduct). Pondering God’s words, I could see that between putting up false fronts and making mistakes, putting up false fronts is the more severe of the two. No one is perfect, so running into problems and making mistakes in your duty is totally normal. But what lies behind a false front are the satanic dispositions of arrogance, cunning, and evil. Always hiding your imperfections and shortcomings, and just letting people see your good side so they look up to and admire you are even more loathsome to God. A truly wise person can properly face their shortcomings, equip themselves with the truth, and make up for what they lack. That way, they can grow. But the foolish, ignorant people who lack self-awareness can’t ever accept their own faults, and they even put up appearances, which means some problems never get resolved, and they never grow in life. Thinking back on my behavior, I realized I had been one of the arrogant fools exposed by God. When I started getting some results in my duty, I felt like I really wasn’t bad, and that I was up to my job as team leader. Plus, I was also able to resolve problems. For these reasons, I really elevated and thought a lot of myself. Consequently, when I encountered things I didn’t know how to handle, I was cautious and indecisive, worried I’d say the wrong thing and ruin my good image. Then I decided to express fewer opinions and ask fewer questions. Even when I did seek help, I’d pick more difficult questions, so as to show my abilities, not wanting everyone to see my shortcomings. I even played mind games, splitting questions between people so that they wouldn’t see through me. I really was arrogant and cunning, and lacked all self-awareness. I put on various acts so people would look up to me. I was such a fool, odious to God, and disgusting to other people. I hid my flaws to protect my name and status, resulting in

problems in my duty being unresolved. I was holding up the work of the church. What was I thinking? I was so despicable and evil. I could hold on to my position for the short term by pretending, but God observes all, and sooner or later I would be exposed and cast out by God for cheating Him and for delaying the church's work. It occurred to me that antichrists particularly treasure status, and won't even spare the interests of the church for their own status. What was the difference between my disposition and perspectives toward pursuit, and those of an antichrist? Did status benefit me at all? It made me unwilling to acknowledge or face my flaws, and I lost my reason. I didn't want to seek when I ran into problems, and instead put on an act and became more and more cunning. As a result I would end up on an antichrist's path, and be despised and cast out by God. That would hurt the work of the church and destroy me. At that point I realized how dangerous going on that way would be. It was a wake-up call that I could no longer do my duty in that way.

I read more of God's words with a path of practice, and it was even more freeing for me. God says: **"Some people are promoted and nurtured by the church, receiving a good chance to be trained. This is something good. It can be said they have been elevated and graced by God. So how, then, should they perform their duty? The first principle they should abide by is to understand the truth. When they do not understand the truth, they must seek the truth, and if they still don't understand after seeking, they can find someone who does understand the truth to fellowship and seek with, which will make solving the problem faster and more timely. If you focus only on spending more time reading God's words by yourself, and on spending more time pondering these words, in order to achieve understanding of the truth and solve the problem, this is too slow; as the saying goes, 'Distant**

water won't slake an urgent thirst.' If, when it comes to the truth, you wish to make quick progress, then you must learn how to work in harmony with others, and to ask more questions, and do more searching. Only then will your life grow quickly, and will you be able to solve problems promptly, without any delay in either. Because you have only just been promoted and are still on probation, and do not truly understand the truth or possess the truth reality—because you still lack this stature—do not think that your promotion means you possess the truth reality; this is not the case. It is merely because you have a sense of burden toward the work and possess the caliber of a leader that you are selected for promotion and nurturing. You should have this sense”

(The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (5)). I thought this over and saw that the church promotes and cultivates people so as to give them an opportunity to practice. By no means does it signify that they understand the truth, can resolve any problem, or are fit for God's use. Throughout their practice they'll encounter all sorts of actual problems, and if they keep seeking and fellowshiping, then they'll slowly start to understand different aspects of the principles. At this point, they'll be able to solve problems and do their duty well. I knew I had to face my flaws properly and know who I was, seek more truth, discuss and fellowship with others more when problems came up, and give it my all. Then, even if one day it became clear that my caliber was indeed not sufficient, that I wasn't up to this job, then at least my conscience would be clear. I felt really relieved once I'd thought that through. I could not go on putting up appearances, instead I had to be honest and squarely face my faults and shortcomings.

In our team discussions after that, I honestly shared my own opinions. I was a little hesitant at first, worried I'd say the wrong thing and appear to

have a shallow understanding and poor caliber. Especially when there were problems I couldn't fully grasp, the opinions I shared weren't very clear, and after I finished talking my heart would start pounding, wondering if everyone would see through me. But then I'd remind myself that this was my actual level, and it was okay if they looked down on me. What's important is being an honest person before God, and it's my duty to express my thoughts and participate in discussions. That's the only peaceful way to live. When I had questions in my duty after that, I went out and asked for others' opinions. Every once in a while I still worried about being looked down on, but when I realized that hiding my faults to protect my pride may hurt the work of the church, I made an effort to turn away from that impulse and seek help. When I did so, I started to understand things I hadn't before, and I felt calmer, more at peace. Sometimes my brothers and sisters had a more accurate understanding than me, and I'd start wondering if everyone was thinking I was no good. But I could see that wasn't the right way to look at things. I had to learn from others' strengths to compensate for my weaknesses. Is that not a gift? I wasn't flustered when I thought about it that way, and with time I started feeling freer and freer. I'm grateful for God's guidance that let me experience how free being honest is, and now I have more faith to put God's words into practice.

97. The Consequences of Excessive Emotional Attachment

By Su Xing, China

One year, during my tenure as a deacon, God's house ordered a cleansing of the church to remove all nonbelievers, evildoers and antichrists from within the ranks of our members. Only by performing such a cleansing could the normal church life of God's chosen be ensured. Soon after, our church began an investigation into these three types of people.

One day, Brother Wang Zhicheng, a church leader, sought me out and told me: "Your wife often distorts the truth and judges leaders and workers during gatherings. Yet when two deacons pointed out this problem, not only did she not accept it, she held a grudge against them and began disparaging them behind their backs. This led some of our brothers and sisters to develop certain biases toward the leaders and workers and severely influenced church life. We fellowshiped and helped her, dealt with and pruned her, but she still didn't see the error of her ways and failed to repent and achieve transformation." Zhicheng also wanted to know more about her behavior in general, so he asked me to write an assessment to help inform a decision as to whether she should be removed. At the time, I felt a bit dejected. Zhicheng was speaking the truth—my wife did, indeed, often judge the leaders and workers, saying they were irresponsible and didn't do practical work. In reality, the leaders had achieved some results in their work and were able to resolve some practical issues, but my wife would nitpick over the smallest issues and find flaws in everything the leaders did. I had fellowshiped with her before regarding this issue, but she just wouldn't change her ways and continued to voice her judgment of the leaders in her gathering group. When her group leader, Brother Yang Yanyi,

told her that she shouldn't be judging leaders and workers during gatherings as it disrupted church life, she began disparaging him, saying that he only spoke words and doctrines and lacked the truth reality. She even went so far as to say he was wasting the brothers and sisters' time during the gathering, when, in fact, most of Yanyi's fellowship was quite practical. My wife's actions were disrupting church life and if, in the course of the church's investigation, it was determined that she was an evildoer, she would be expelled from the church. At the time, I thought to myself: "If she is expelled, doesn't that mean she won't be able to attain salvation?" Realizing this, I told the leader: "The reason my wife caused these disturbances and disruptions is because she only accepted God's work in the last days a little over two years ago and hasn't yet comprehended the truth. I'll make sure to fellowship with her when I return home and see if I can get her to repent. As for the assessment, can we hold off on that for now?" Zhicheng fellowshiped with me, saying that God's house has always emphasized that evildoers and nonbelievers that disrupt the church's work must be removed in order to prevent them from impacting normal church life. He asked me to complete my assessment as soon as possible and assured me that the church would make a fair judgment in accord with principle based upon her overall behavior. I knew Zhicheng was right, but when it came to writing an assessment of my wife, I just felt awful. My wife and I had suffered a lot since entering the faith. It was bad enough when our neighbors all mocked and ridiculed us, but even our close friends and family had all abandoned us—we had been through some very difficult times together. If I wrote out all of her wicked behaviors and she was ultimately expelled, then wouldn't all of her suffering have been in vain? What's more, if she were to find out that it was my assessment that had exposed all of her wicked behaviors, wouldn't she say I had neglected our

marital bond and had been heartless to her? I thought to myself: “Forget it. I shouldn’t write it.” But then I reconsidered, thinking: “I am clearly aware that my wife has been disrupting church life. If I don’t report my wife’s behaviors to the church in a prompt manner, won’t I be concealing the truth and covering up for her? That would be offensive to God!” Having realized all this, I felt agonized and upset. I couldn’t let go of my emotional attachment to my wife and didn’t know how best to proceed. For the next few days, whenever I returned home, I would fellowship with my wife and encourage her to repent. She would perfunctorily agree, but when I pressed her further, she’d get offended and refuse to accept my fellowship. Seeing how she hadn’t made even the slightest improvement, I became so tormented that I could barely eat or get a good night’s sleep.

Later on, during a co-worker meeting, a leader observed how I was being ruled by my emotional attachments and still hadn’t written the assessment, and so he fellowshiped with me, saying: “The truth reigns in God’s house. No evildoer will be spared, and no good person wrongfully accused. As a deacon of this church, you should lead the way in practicing the truth to preserve the church’s work.” I felt a bit ashamed after hearing the leader’s fellowship. Indeed, as a church deacon, if the church wanted to understand more about my wife’s situation, I ought to actively cooperate. Instead, I kept delaying writing the assessment and, in so doing, failed to preserve the work of the church. In reality, this was a wake-up call for my wife and a chance for her to realize she was having some issues. If she accepted the truth and repented and achieved transformation in a timely fashion, there could be a positive outcome. After returning home, just as I was getting ready to write my assessment, I saw my wife dutifully busying herself with chores throughout the house and began to hesitate. I hurriedly prayed to God, asking that He guide me to let go of my fleshly emotions

and practice the truth to preserve the work of the church. After concluding my prayer, these words of God came to mind: **“What are feelings, in essence? They are a kind of corrupt disposition. The manifestations of feelings can be described using several words: favoritism, unprincipled protection of others, maintenance of physical relationships, and partiality; these are what feelings are”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Truth Reality?). **“What issues relate to emotions? Number one is how you evaluate your own family, how you react to the things they do. ‘The things they do’ includes when they disrupt and disturb the church’s work, when they are judgmental about people behind their backs, when they do the things of the nonbelievers, and so on. Could you be impartial toward these things your family does? If you were asked to evaluate your family in writing, would you do so objectively and fairly, putting your own emotions aside? This relates to how you should face family members. And are you sentimental toward those you get on with or who previously helped you? Would you be objective, impartial, and precise about their actions and behavior? Would you immediately report or expose them if you discovered them disrupting and disturbing the work of the church? What’s more, are you sentimental toward those who are close to you, or who share similar interests? Would your evaluation, definition, and response to their actions and behavior be impartial and objective? And how would you react if principle dictated that the church take measures against someone who you have an emotional connection with, and these measures were at odds with your own notions? Would you obey? Would you secretly continue to liaise with them, would you still be inveigled by them, would you even be prompted by them to make excuses for them, to rationalize and defend them? Would you fall on**

your sword for and come to the aid of those who have been kind to you, oblivious to the truth principles and heedless of the interests of God's house? This all involves various issues to do with emotions, does it not?" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (2)). God's words revealed how those with strong emotional attachments do not conduct themselves with principle, much less are they able to act fairly. Instead, they play favorites and maintain their fleshly relationships without the least consideration for the interests of the church. Measuring myself up against God's words, I found that I had excessive emotional attachment. I knew perfectly well that insofar as my wife often distorted the facts, judged leaders and workers and disrupted church life, I should practice the truth and expose her wicked behaviors. Only in so doing would I be heedful of God's will and be preserving the church's work. Yet, because I couldn't abandon my familial bond, feared that my wife would lose her chance to attain salvation and worried that she would begrudge me, I remained partial to her, covered up for her, delayed writing her assessment and allowed her to continue disrupting the church. In covering for her, I hadn't spared the least amount of consideration for the work of the church, nor had I thought about how it may be damaging my brothers' and sisters' lives. I was truly despicable! Realizing all this, I thought: "I can't go against my conscience and offend God any longer. I must practice the truth, abandon my fleshly emotions and expose her wicked behaviors." With that, I picked up my pen and wrote out each and every one of the wicked behaviors I had observed in my wife. A few days later, the leaders and workers decided based on principle that my wife had poor humanity, had disrupted church life many times and should be expelled, but because she had only accepted God's work in the last days for a short time, she would be given one more chance to repent. She would be pruned, dealt with and

given a warning, but if she still failed to repent, she would be expelled. I was relieved upon hearing this news, knowing that she still had a chance to turn things around. I resolved to buckle down and really help my wife recognize her wicked behaviors and repent to God. If she could repent and achieve transformation, then she wouldn't be removed. If that were the case, there was still hope that she could attain salvation. When I got home, I pointed out all of my wife's issues to her and urged her to cherish this opportunity to repent. At the time, she assented to my request. After that, she wouldn't argue with her brothers and sisters and judge the leaders and workers during gatherings. She willingly accepted to host the brothers and sisters when it was assigned to her by the church and she seemed, at least from the outside, to be restraining herself a bit more. I felt so happy for her, but as time went on, her true nature once again reared its head.

One time, during a gathering, a group leader Sister Liu Yi asked how one should practice and enter into the truth of fearing God and shunning evil. Upon hearing this, my wife disparaged Liu Yi, saying: "You exposed me before, saying I judged the leaders and workers and perpetrated evil, but you don't even understand the truth of fearing God and shunning evil! Why are you even the leader of this group? What makes you qualified to criticize me?" She went on releasing this tirade of invective against Liu Yi, refusing to stop when the others told her to do so. Eventually, her ranting got so loud that a neighbor came to ask what was going on and the gathering had to be discontinued out of concern for safety. When I found out what had happened, I dealt with her and told her that her tirade had disrupted and disturbed church life, but she wasn't having any of it and even tried to defend herself. Afterward, she remained angry with me and wouldn't give me the time of day. It was truly demoralizing to see her take this kind of attitude with me. After that, because I was fairly well known among

believers in my hometown and also because a wicked person had reported me for spreading the gospel, my wife and I were forced to flee and fulfill our duties away from home at a new church. Once, during a gathering, my wife's understanding of a passage of God's words was a little off and the other brothers and sisters pointed out her error, telling her this wasn't an authentic interpretation of God's words. My wife, however, was unwilling to concede and kept harping on her point to the extent that it disrupted the whole flow of the gathering. Another time, she came to the defense of an evildoer that the church was preparing to expel and severely disrupted the church's work. When I found out about this, I dealt with and exposed her, but she wouldn't concede my point and even thought that she was in the right. On another occasion, my wife heard from somewhere that the church leader was in danger and so she blocked the leader from attending the gathering, saying that he would endanger the other participants. She went so far as to say she was helping protect the church's work, and she sowed fear among the brothers and sisters, advising them not to associate with the leader. She really had no idea what she was talking about and made all kinds of ridiculous statements and actions that directly disrupted church life. I was angry and upset when I heard what had happened and fellowshiped with her, saying: "You obstructed the leader from attending the gathering, sowed fear among the brothers and sisters, blocked people from coming into contact with the leader and hindered the leader's ability to perform his duty. Were you not doing evil and disrupting church life? In the past, the church didn't clear you out when you perpetrated all that evil because you had only been a believer for a short period of time. They gave you a chance to repent, but you didn't repent at all and even continued to do evil. If you continue on like this, you will inevitably be expelled. How will you attain salvation then?" She just lowered her head and didn't offer any

response. She didn't have any self-awareness and failed to correct her behavior going forward. She didn't take what I had said to her while dealing with and exposing her seriously and didn't have the slightest intention of repenting. With regard to my wife's actions, I came across a passage of God's words that said: **"Those among brothers and sisters who are always giving vent to their negativity are lackeys of Satan, and they disturb the church. Such people must one day be expelled and cast out. In their belief in God, if people do not have a God-fearing heart, if they do not have a God-obeying heart, then not only will they be unable to do any work for Him, but on the contrary will become those who disturb His work and who defy Him. Believing in God but not obeying or fearing Him, and instead resisting Him, is the greatest disgrace for a believer. If believers are just as casual and unrestrained in their speech and conduct as unbelievers are, then they are even more evil than unbelievers; they are archetypal demons. Those who give vent to their poisonous, malicious talk within the church, who spread rumors, foment disharmony, and form cliques among the brothers and sisters—they should have been expelled from the church. Yet because now is a different era of God's work, these people are restricted, for they are decidedly to be cast out. All who have been corrupted by Satan have corrupt dispositions. Some have nothing more than corrupt dispositions, while others are different: Not only do they have corrupt satanic dispositions, but their nature is also extremely malicious. Not only do their words and actions reveal their corrupt, satanic dispositions; these people are, moreover, the genuine devil Satan. Their behavior disrupts and disturbs God's work, it disturbs the brothers' and sisters' life entry, and it damages the normal life of the church. Sooner or later, these wolves in sheep's clothing must be cleared out; an**

unsparing attitude, an attitude of rejection, should be adopted toward these lackeys of Satan. Only this is standing on the side of God, and those who fail to do so are wallowing in the mire with Satan” (The Word,

Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth).

My wife’s actions were just like those that God described. In the past, she often distorted the truth and judged the leaders and workers and even incited conflict between the brothers and sisters and the leaders and workers. Now she was up to her old tricks again, acting recklessly, obstructing the leader from fulfilling his duty and severely impacting the work of the church. Our leader in the previous church had dissected her evil behaviors, but she still lacked self-awareness and wouldn’t repent. She even begrudged those that tried to help her and struck out at them when the first opportunity presented itself. It was clear that she didn’t accept the truth at all and even detested and despised the truth. These behaviors were not just normal manifestations of corruption or isolated transgressions, they represented a pattern of disruption and disturbance and none of the advising or persuasion offered to her had changed her ways. This was a manifestation of a malicious nature! The essence of evildoers is to detest and despise the truth and fail to truly repent even after years of faith. Reflecting on the revelation of God’s words, I realized that my wife was an evildoer and, sooner or later, she would be expelled from the church. Yet, I still couldn’t bear to see her get expelled after all these years in the faith—the mere thought of this tormented me to no end. Even though I knew that her inevitable expulsion was the result of her own evildoing and that she had dug her own grave, I still couldn’t bear to see it happen and wanted to protect her. Just at that time, the church leader asked me to write an assessment of my wife. At the time, I thought: “Perhaps I can just write about the misdeeds that the brothers and sisters in this church are already

aware of and leave out her incidents in the previous church that people here don't know about. Maybe then she'll have a chance to remain in the church." So I just wrote a perfunctory summary of some of her current misdeeds and handed it in. A few days later, the leader said to me: "That was a pretty basic evaluation that you wrote. Did you report all of your wife's misdeeds? In conducting ourselves, we must accept God's scrutiny. We mustn't conceal the facts and reality due to our personal emotional attachments." The leader's words left me feeling conflicted. Indeed, I did not report all of my wife's misdeeds, because if I did, then based on her overall pattern of behaviors, she would be determined to be an evildoer and immediately expelled. Given how resistant she was, if she really were expelled and found out that I had contributed evidence, I would never hear the end of it. What's more, if my children found out what had happened, wouldn't they say I had treated my own wife like an outsider? Then again, if I didn't provide a truthful account in my evaluation, I'd be concealing the facts and reality and covering up an evildoer, allowing her to continue committing evil and disrupting the church's work. I felt so agonized and went back and forth in my head, unable to make up my mind.

After returning home, I came across the following passages of God's words: **"You must cast aside your emotions as soon as you can; I do not act out of emotion, but exercise righteousness instead. If your parents do anything that is of no benefit to the church, they cannot escape. My intentions have been revealed to you, and you may not ignore them. Rather, you must focus all of your attention on them, and cast everything else aside to follow wholeheartedly. I will always keep you in My hands. Do not always be timid and under the control of your husband or wife; you must allow My will to be carried out"** (The Word, Vol.

1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 9). **"Who is**

Satan, who are demons, and who are God's enemies if not resisters who do not believe in God? Are they not those people who are disobedient to God? Are they not those who claim to have faith, yet who lack truth? Are they not those who merely seek to obtain blessings while being unable to bear witness for God? You still mingle with those demons today and bear conscience and love toward them, but in this case are you not extending good intentions toward Satan? Are you not in league with demons? If people these days are still unable to distinguish between good and evil, and continue to blindly be loving and merciful without any intention of seeking God's will or being able in any way to harbor God's intentions as their own, then their endings will be all the more wretched. Anyone who does not believe in the God in the flesh is an enemy of God. If you can bear conscience and love toward an enemy, do you not lack a sense of righteousness? If you are compatible with those which I detest and with which I disagree, and still bear love or personal feelings toward them, then are you not disobedient? Are you not intentionally resisting God? Does such a person possess truth? If people bear conscience toward enemies, love for demons, and mercy for Satan, then are they not intentionally disrupting God's work? Those people who believe only in Jesus and do not believe in God incarnate during the last days, as well as those who verbally claim to believe in God incarnate but do evil, are all antichrists, without even mentioning those who do not even believe in God. All these people will be objects of destruction" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). The judgment and revelation of God's words was heartrending. I knew full well that my wife had the essence of an evildoer and should be expelled, but because of my emotional attachment to her, I couldn't bear to see her expelled and lose her chance of achieving

salvation. I also worried that my wife and children would say I was heartless and unfaithful to the family when they found out I had provided an assessment. I covered up the facts and made only a brief, perfunctory sketch of my wife's behaviors in an effort to trick and deceive God and my brothers and sisters. I was well aware that my wife would only continue to disrupt church life if she were to remain in the church, but I still doubled down and covered up her misdeeds without the slightest thought for what damage this may cause to the work of the church. Was I not covering for an evildoer, resisting God and harming the church and my brothers and sisters? I couldn't distinguish between good and evil and gave in to my sentimental, loving attachment to this evildoer. What an idiot I was! I reflected on how the reason I had continually favored my emotional attachments over practice of the truth was because deeply ingrained satanic toxins like "Man is not inanimate; how can he be free from emotions?" and "Once a man and woman are married, their loving bond runs deep" had caused me to place too much importance on my emotional bonds and think that in life one must be affectionate and faithful. I had come to think of these satanic philosophies as positive things and, as a result, was incapable of distinguishing between good and evil, right and wrong, lacked principle in the way I conducted myself, maintained emotional ties with, covered for an evildoer, and allowed her to disrupt church life and obstruct the work of the church. Was I not a willing participant in the evildoer's misdeeds? I was slightly horrified by this realization and felt deeply ashamed and regretful. If I had practiced the truth and exposed my wife's misdeeds so that my brothers and sisters could have discernment toward her and promptly expel her from the church, then disruptions to church life could have been avoided. I reflected back on all of my wife's misbehaviors—she might have had some enthusiasm, but she didn't accept the truth at all and only served

to disturb in the church. The church had given her numerous opportunities to repent and my brothers and sisters and I had fellowshiped with her multiple times and even dealt with and pruned her, giving her several warnings, but she didn't accept the truth at all, didn't repent. On the contrary, she would judge and attack our brothers and sisters. I realized that she despised and detested the truth and was just like the weeds exposed by God in His work of the last days. I thought of a passage from Revelation, which says: **"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still"** (Revelation 22:11). Indeed, once an evildoer, always an evildoer. She was never going to change, no matter the situation.

Later on, I came across another passage of God's words: **"Everyone's outcome is determined according to the essence that comes from their conduct, and it is always determined appropriately. No one can bear the sins of another; even more so, no one can receive punishment in another's stead. This is absolute. ... In the end, doers of righteousness are doers of righteousness, and evildoers are evildoers. The righteous will eventually be allowed to survive, while the evildoers will be destroyed. The holy are holy; they are not filthy. The filthy are filthy, and not one part of them is holy. The people who will be destroyed are all the wicked ones, and the ones who will survive are all the righteous—even if the children of the wicked ones perform righteous deeds, and even if the parents of the righteous ones commit evil deeds. There is no relationship between a believing husband and an unbelieving wife, and there is no relationship between believing children and unbelieving parents; these two types of people are completely incompatible. Prior to entering into rest, one has physical relatives, but once one has entered**

into rest, one will no longer have any physical relatives to speak of. Those who do their duty are enemies of those who do not; those who love God and those who hate Him are in opposition to one another. Those who will enter into rest and those who will have been destroyed are two incompatible types of creatures. Creatures that fulfill their duties will be able to survive, while those that do not fulfill their duties will be objects of destruction; what is more, this shall last through eternity. ... There are physical relationships that exist between the people of today, as well as associations by blood, but in the future, these will all be shattered. Believers and unbelievers are not compatible; rather, they are opposed to one another. Those in rest will believe that there is a God and will submit to God, whereas those who are disobedient to God will all have been destroyed. Families will no longer exist upon earth; how could there be parents or children or spousal relationships? The very incompatibility of belief and unbelief will have utterly severed such physical relationships!” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). Through God’s words, I learned that God determines people’s outcomes based upon their essence. God does not save evildoers, He saves those that can accept the truth and truly repent, while casting out those that cannot accept and even detest and despise the truth. In her essence, my wife is an evildoer and cannot be saved by God. Even if she were to remain in the church, she would eventually be cast out and would only endure ever more severe punishments for her continued evildoing. I hadn’t comprehended God’s righteous disposition, thinking only of how to safeguard my fleshly emotional bonds, not practicing the truth and believing that as long as I concealed my wife’s misdeeds, she could remain in the church and muddle her way into the kingdom of God. What ridiculous notions I entertained! In the last days,

God performs the work of “classifying each according to their kind.” He determines each person’s destination and outcome based upon their actions and nature essence. The good shall be grouped with the good, and evil with evil. My wife would have to accept the consequences of her misdeeds as this is what God’s righteous disposition dictates. I came across another passage of God’s words that said: **“All of you say you are considerate of God’s burden and will defend the testimony of the church, but who among you has really been considerate of God’s burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for His burden? Can you practice righteousness for Him? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan’s deeds? Would you be able to set your emotions aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you allow My intentions to be fulfilled in you? Have you offered up your heart in the most crucial of moments? Are you someone who does My will?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). God’s words made me feel even more regretful and ashamed. I had allowed my emotional attachments to dictate my actions, playing tricks on and deceiving God, harming my brothers and sisters and obstructing the normal progress of the work of cleansing. I couldn’t act according to emotions any longer, I had to be considerate of God’s will, conduct myself according to principle, expose all of my wife’s misdeeds and stop letting her disrupt the church’s work. I wrote down all the evil deeds and overall pattern of behavior I had observed in my wife throughout our time in the church and handed in my assessment to the leader. Soon after, the church leaders and workers determined that my wife was an evildoer based upon her overall conduct and it was decided through a church-wide vote to have her expelled. After her expulsion, church life

went back to normal. I had truly witnessed God's righteousness and felt good that I had played my part in exposing and expelling an evildoer from the church. I felt much more at peace and grounded as a result. It was through reading God's words that I was able to resist the constraints of emotional attachment, expose my wife's misdeeds, and do my part in protecting the work of the church. Thank God!

98. Behind the Scenes of a Family's Persecution

By Chen Li, China

My mom and sister shared Almighty God's gospel of the last days with me in October 2009. After accepting it, I read God's words every day, and attended gatherings and fellowshiped with the brothers and sisters. I gradually came to understand some truths from God's words; I learned about the root of darkness and evil in the world, what we should pursue in our lives, and how to live a life with meaning. Finding the right path in life made me so happy, relaxed, and carefree. My husband and daughter noticed that after becoming a believer I was usually in a better mood, so they didn't oppose my faith. Later on, my husband had to leave the area for work, so I was taking care of our children while also spreading the gospel.

One evening in the spring of 2013, my husband called me out of the blue and said in a really commanding tone, "From now on, just do what you should and stay at home—no more believing in God. They're saying online and on the TV news that those Almighty God believers abandon their families. Don't get to the point where you turn your back on our family. Also, having faith is against the law in China and you'll be arrested if the authorities find out. How can regular people like us go up against the Communist Party? If the government says you can't be religious, don't do it. Don't stir up trouble out of thin air!" Afraid my cellphone was possibly being monitored by the police, I didn't let him keep talking. I was so upset after I hung up. How could he just blindly listen to the Communist Party's lies? He knew that believing in God is a good thing and he supported my faith, so why would he try to stand in my way the moment he heard their lies? It's obvious that following God is the right path in life—why doesn't the Communist Party let people have faith? We don't do anything illegal as

believers, so why do they insist on arresting and persecuting us? I told a sister about my confusion in a gathering after that, and she shared a passage of God's words with me. God said: **"The great red dragon persecutes God and is the enemy of God, and so, in this land, those who believe in God are thus subjected to humiliation and oppression.... Because it is embarked upon in a land that opposes God, all of God's work faces tremendous obstacles, and accomplishing many of His words takes time; thus, people are refined as a result of God's words, which is also part of suffering. It is tremendously difficult for God to carry out His work in the land of the great red dragon—but it is through this difficulty that God does one stage of His work, making manifest His wisdom and His wondrous deeds, and using this opportunity to make this group of people complete. It is through people's suffering, through their caliber, and through all the satanic dispositions of the people of this filthy land that God does His work of purification and conquest, so that, from this, He may gain glory, and so that He may gain those who will bear witness to His deeds. Such is the entire significance of all the sacrifices that God has made for this group of people"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). After reading this, she fellowshiped with me, saying, "The Communist Party is atheistic; it's an anti-God demon and it absolutely cannot tolerate anyone having faith, worshiping God. It has been arresting and persecuting Christians ever since it's come to power. Now that Almighty God has appeared and is working in the last days, expressing truths to save mankind, the Communist Party is afraid that people will read Almighty God's words, understand the truth and gain discernment. Then they'll truly see its evil face and no longer be taken in by it—people won't follow it anymore. That's why it's wildly ramped up its opposition and condemnation of God, and its persecution of

believers. It's also been spreading all sorts of rumors and lies to mislead our unbeliever friends and family, and incite them to disturb and obstruct us from following God. The Communist Party wants to get everyone to deny and betray God so we lose God's salvation and end up punished in hell along with it. If we're reined in by our families and do not dare to follow God or do a duty, that means we've fallen for Satan's tricks and lost our chance at salvation. God allows us to suffer the Communist Party's suppression and arrests—He's using it as a service-doer so that we can clearly see its demonic essence, gain discernment over it, and reject it. At the same time, through this God can perfect our faith and make us overcomers. God's benevolent will is within this!" After listening to this sister's fellowship, it became clear to me that God allows the Communist Party's oppression and my family's disturbances so that I can fully see that the Party is Satan, the devil—an enemy of God. This is wisdom within God's work. The Communist Party spreads lies to misguide people so that they go along with it in opposing God and persecuting believers, disrupting and sabotaging the work of God. This is the Communist Party's evil intention, and I knew I couldn't fall for Satan's tricks.

The sister read another passage of God's words for me after that: **"As believers in God, each of you should appreciate how you have truly gained the utmost exaltation and salvation by receiving the work of God in the last days and the work of His plan that He does in you today. God has made this group of people the sole focus of His work throughout all the universe. He has sacrificed all His heart's blood for you; He has reclaimed and given to you all the work of the Spirit throughout the universe. That is why you are the fortunate ones. Moreover, He has shifted His glory from Israel, His chosen people, onto you, and He shall make the purpose of His plan fully manifest through**

this group. Therefore, you are the ones who will receive the inheritance of God, and even more than this, you are the heirs to God's glory" (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?).

Reading this made me feel incredibly honored. In order to save us, who have been so deeply corrupted by Satan, God has become flesh and come to earth to work a second time, suffering the opposition, condemnation, and even blasphemy of the Communist Party and the religious world. He has endured tremendous indignities, expressing the truth and doing His work to save mankind, giving all His blood, sweat, and tears. This is God's extraordinary love! God's work is about to come to a close. This chance at salvation is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I can't miss—no matter how oppressive the Communist Party is or how my husband may stand in my way, I knew I had to have faith and follow God. After that, my husband kept calling me over and over to try to keep me from believing in God, even yelling at me. It was kind of painful, but I knew that having faith is right and proper, so I was never held back by him and I kept on doing my duty.

Then in May 2014, when my husband saw I still hadn't given up my faith, he came back to our town from where he'd been working. He said to me really fiercely, "I've told you over and over that you need to give up your faith, but you just won't listen. Everyone online and on TV is saying that people abandon their families after becoming believers, but you're still into that?" I thought to myself that the Communist Party accusing believers of abandoning their families is just victim blaming. It doesn't allow people to have faith and take the right path, so it madly arrests and persecutes Christians, forcing so many brothers and sisters to flee their homes and wander from place to place. Clearly, brothers and sisters aren't able to go home because of the Communist Party's oppression, but they say we abandon our families after becoming believers. Isn't that twisting the truth?

So I said to my husband, “Everything people say online is false. Those are just Communist Party’s lies condemning, smearing The Church of Almighty God....” But he wouldn’t listen to me at all. He just said, “Anyway that’s what they’re saying on the internet, so if you keep believing in God and the government finds out, you’ll be arrested and sent to prison. The Communist Party is capable of anything. If they say you shouldn’t believe, stop believing. How can an egg crack a rock? I’m going to stay at home and keep an eye on you. If you keep on believing, we’re getting a divorce!” I was thinking: What if we got a divorce and our two kids didn’t have anyone to look after them? Would they end up on the wrong path? Losing their mother’s love at such a young age would hurt them beyond belief! The thought of how hurtful and unfair it would be for our kids was utterly heart-wrenching. I quickly came before God in prayer, “God! My husband wants to divorce me, and I’m so worried about my children. Please protect me and allow me to stand strong.” I thought of something God said after my prayer: **“The fate of man is controlled by the hands of God. You are incapable of controlling yourself: Despite man always rushing and busying himself on his own behalf, he remains incapable of controlling himself. If you could know your own prospects, if you could control your own fate, would you still be a created being?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Restoring the Normal Life of Man and Taking Him to a Wonderful Destination). God’s words really brightened my heart and showed me that people’s fates are entirely in God’s hands. The most I could do was take slightly better care of my children in their lives; I couldn’t decide what sort of fate they’d have, or how much they might suffer. I needed to leave them in God’s hands and submit to God’s orchestrations and arrangements. This thought allowed me to take a sigh of relief—I wasn’t in so much agony anymore. I also realized that my husband being misled by the Communist

Party's lies, trying to keep me from following God and threatening me with divorce was all Satan's trickery. I couldn't fall for it. So I told him, "I'll never give up my faith. Believing in God and reading God's words is being a good person and taking the right path. Why do you always go along with the Party and stand in my way?" Then he suddenly pushed me down onto the bed and yelled, enraged, "Our government is anti-religious. If the Communist Party doesn't want you to be a believer, don't be a believer! Who can possibly defeat them?" Our daughter witnessed this whole scene and got so scared that she ran over and said, "Dad, what are you doing? Mom's been so much happier since she started believing in God. Faith is a good thing! Don't meddle with it!" Without remotely listening to her, my husband smacked her across the face. I was so angry! He hit our daughter just because she said something in my defense. I saw my husband was following the Communist Party and trying like a madman to keep me from my faith—he'd already lost all reason. I didn't want to say anything more to him and I took our daughter back to her room. First thing the next day, we went to the Civil Affairs Bureau. Before we'd started our divorce procedures, my husband's uncle showed up and under his advice, my husband decided not to go through with the divorce.

My husband kept being oppressive and standing in the way of my faith after that. He was constantly sarcastic and pulled a long face whenever he saw me coming back from a gathering. His attitude also got worse and worse. One night around 10 p.m. my husband came back home, pretty drunk, and pulled me up in bed like a maniac, saying forcefully, "Now that you believe in God, I don't have any face at all out in the world. Everyone's talking about your religion. What do our friends think of me now? If you keep on with this God stuff, you'll be arrested and dealt with by the government. Eventually, none of our family members will be able to hold

their heads up. You have to stop believing!” I tend to be a timid person, so I got scared when I saw how fierce he looked. He was in a fit of rage and he’d had so much to drink—I didn’t know what he might do. I kept calling on God to protect me and I managed to slowly calm down. Seeing I still wasn’t going to give up my faith, my husband got even angrier. He picked me up off the bed and threw me down onto the floor, then punched me in the face several times, giving me black eyes. I told him, “There’s nothing wrong with me having faith. Why are you hitting me? Why do you always take the Communist Party’s side and oppress me?” He didn’t take in anything I said, but just picked me up and carried me toward the window, acting like a total lunatic. I was praying to God in my heart over and over. He carried me over to the windowsill, grabbed me by the ankles, and let my head hang down, with my entire body dangling outside the window. Then he yelled, “Say it! Say you’ll give up your faith! If you don’t, I’ll throw you down from here right now!” We lived on the fifth floor, so if he threw me down, that would be the end of me. I was so afraid, and I kept praying to God, “God! Please protect me and give me faith. Even if I die today, I still won’t give in to Satan!” At that moment I suddenly thought of Job’s experience. Throughout his trials, God was keeping an eye on him, and Satan was also watching. Ultimately, Job stood firm in his testimony to God, and Satan was shamed and retreated. So in my heart I called out to Satan, “Satan, I don’t care what sort of evil tactics you use against me—I’ll never betray God. I’ll keep believing in God and following Him, even if it means my death!” Once I established this resolve it felt like my body got really light, and even though I was upside down, it didn’t feel like the blood was welling up in my head. It felt like there was some force holding my body up. I knew that my husband clearly wasn’t strong enough to hold me up. This was God’s protection, and I thanked God over and over in my

heart. Just then, our kids saw what was happening from our other balcony—they ran over and started knocking on the door. They were crying and shouting, but my husband had it locked from the inside, so they couldn't get in. Our daughter got onto the other balcony and shouted, "Dad, what do you think you're doing?" She was crying really loudly, and kept screaming at him not to throw me down. Then it seemed like he suddenly came to, and he pulled me back up. I was so filled with gratitude toward God. If it hadn't been for God's protection, I definitely would have lost my life.

I couldn't sleep at all that evening. I was thinking about the days when my husband and I worked hard together—we'd always gotten along so well, and when I first gained my faith, he didn't stand in my way at all. But now he was believing the Communist Party's lies and oppressing me, time after time. No matter how I explained things to him, he just wouldn't listen, and was even threatening me with divorce to make me give up my faith. He even raised his hand against me, and had nearly thrown me out of a fifth-floor window. He seemed like an entirely different person. It was so heartbreaking, so upsetting. I didn't understand how my husband could change like that. Just then, I thought of these words from God: **"Believers and unbelievers are not compatible; rather, they are opposed to one another"** and **"Anyone who does not believe in God incarnate is demonic and, moreover, will be destroyed. ... Who is Satan, who are demons, and who are God's enemies if not resisters who do not believe in God?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). I realized it wasn't that my husband had changed as a person, but that his essence had been revealed. He knew well that faith in God is a good thing, but he still stood on the Communist Party's side, opposing me. In essence, he hated and went against God. That's why he was capable of being so vicious with me. He nearly killed me, and he totally lost all reason

—that was a manifestation of a demon! I was living with a devil that was totally opposed to God; we were on different paths—so how could we be happy together? He was good to me at first, but that was just because I bore his children and took care of all the housekeeping. But now that my faith was impinging upon his own interests, his true face was showing. Realizing this helped me gain discernment over my husband’s actual essence, and I was able to let go of him a bit in my heart. Later on, I read this in God’s words: **“When God works, cares for a person, and looks upon this person, and when He favors and approves this person, Satan trails closely behind, trying to dupe the person and bring them to harm. If God wishes to gain this person, Satan will do everything in its power to obstruct God, using various evil ploys to tempt, disturb and impair the work of God, in order to achieve its hidden objective. What is this objective? It does not want God to gain anyone; it wants to snatch possession of those whom God wishes to gain, it wants to control them, to take charge of them so they worship it, so they join it in committing evil acts, and resist God. Is this not Satan’s sinister motive?”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique IV). I considered God’s words, and realized that Satan was using all sorts of evil tactics to sabotage people’s faith, stopping at nothing to vie with God over people. That way everyone would worship Satan and betray God, and then lose their chance at salvation. Staying strong in your faith in God, continuing to obey Him, and standing firm in your testimony to Him is the only way to fight back against Satan’s tricks and truly shame it. I thought of Job’s experience: Job feared God and shunned evil, so Satan despised Job, and attacked and tested him. Satan caused Job to lose all of his possessions and children, but not only did Job not blame God, he even praised God’s name. Then Satan made boils grow all over Job’s body, and got his wife to attack him, trying to make him

give up God. Not only did Job not go along with that, but he rebuked his wife as a foolish woman. Ultimately, Job bore resounding witness for God, and Satan was fully shamed. I thought back on what I'd experienced, the lies fabricated by the Communist Party, and how it used my husband time after time to oppose my faith, trying to get me to betray God and ultimately go down into hell and be punished along with it. I knew I had to follow Job's example; no matter what sort of evil tactics Satan used against me, I couldn't give in to it. I had to have faith in God, lean on Him and stand firm in my testimony. At this thought I was much more relaxed, and I felt free in a way I never had before. After this, my husband saw I was still committed to believing in God and sharing the gospel, so he didn't concern himself too much with my faith.

My daughter tested into university after that, but my son didn't. My husband wanted to do everything in his power to get him enlisted in the army. One day, my husband came back and said to me angrily, "You and your mom have really screwed me over! I tried to get our son enlisted in the army, but they found out that your mom is religious, so I had to say everything I could to persuade them, plus spend money, and give them gifts to seal the deal. Don't think everything's fine now! If you keep your faith and the government finds out about it, our son won't get into the army and our daughter won't get into university. They won't have a future anymore. Why can't you think of our home, of our children? If you insist on keeping your faith, there's no way we can go on together. We'll have to divorce. Give it some good thought!" I was so angry when he said that. The Communist Party really is evil to the utmost degree—it was threatening my children's futures to get me to betray God. I hated it from the depths of my heart! But when I thought of my faith impacting my children's futures, and that they would certainly blame and hate me, I was pretty upset and felt like

I owed them. Then I thought of these words from God: **“What occupation one pursues, what one does for a living, and how much wealth one amasses in life are not decided by one’s parents, one’s talents, one’s efforts or one’s ambitions, but are predetermined by the Creator”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). It’s true. People’s fates are all in God’s hands, and my children’s fates are in God’s hands, too. What kind of career they will have, and what sort of future they will have was determined by God long ago. It’s not something I can manipulate, and it’s not something the Communist Party has final say over. Besides, even if the Communist Party made sure my daughter couldn’t get into university and thus couldn’t find a decent job, that would mean their policies were too evil—it wouldn’t be any fault of mine. When I thought about it that way, I slowly let go of my concerns and I said to my husband, “I’ve thought it through. There’s nothing wrong with my faith, but if you’re afraid of being implicated and really want to get a divorce, let’s go do the paperwork.” He said, “If we divorce, you won’t get a share of our family’s property!” I was really angry to hear that. We’d been married for 20 years, but he wanted to get a divorce just because I believed in God, and would not give me a single penny of our family’s million-plus yuan in assets. He wanted to leave me with nothing. It was heartless! I saw beyond so-called “marital bliss,” and got a divorce with my husband without any hesitation.

I felt really at peace, and really free when we walked out of the Civil Affairs Bureau. It was God guiding me step by step, and the enlightenment from His words, that allowed me to overcome Satan’s tests and attacks. I was so grateful for God’s mercy and protection! In China, having faith means undergoing so much oppression and hardship, but no matter what I may experience in the future, I’m absolutely sure I’ll follow God until the very end!

99. Reflections of a Terminally Ill Patient

By Titie, China

In June of 2013, my period lasted more than ten days, and I passed some big blood clots. At the time, I only felt a little pain in my lower right abdomen from time to time, so I didn't think much of it. But during my period the following month, I started passing more and more clots and the bleeding got heavier and heavier. I was a bit scared, so I went to the hospital to get it checked out. The doctor sent me home to wait for the results. But, the very next day I had continuous bleeding. The best medicine to halt bleeding only temporarily stopped it and the bleeding started back up as soon as it wore off. I broke out in a cold, full-body sweat from losing too much blood. I was all alone at home at that time. I thought to myself: "What if I lose so much blood that I die?" I rushed to call my sister and then collapsed onto my bed, unable to move. My sister quickly called an ambulance and had me rushed to the hospital. I was frighteningly pale because of all the blood loss. My lips had turned purple and my face was as pallid as a corpse's. I had full-body chills and was in desperate need of a blood transfusion, but the hospital's plasma reserves were empty and no more would arrive until 1 a.m. I was terrified when I heard the hospital was out of plasma, thinking, "There are still eight hours to go until 1 a.m. How can I make it that long? I've nearly bled out everything, so in eight hours won't I already be dead? I'm still so young. If I died, I'll never see the azure blue of the sky again, or the beautiful vistas of the kingdom." I was really scared, and continually called out to God: "O God! Please save me!" Just then, I recalled a sentence of God's words: **"So long as you still have one breath, God will not let you die"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 6). God's words gave me a lot of faith.

As long as I still had one breath, I would not die without God's consent. I silently prayed to God: "God, I give thanks to You. When I'm helpless and afraid, only Your words can comfort me. I still have one breath, and as long as You do not let me die, I will keep on living. I believe in what You say." After prayer, I felt much calmer and less afraid. My husband got to the hospital at around 6 p.m., but when he heard what'd happened, he didn't offer me a single word of comfort. He just looked at me, spoke briefly with those around me, and then walked right out. My husband had been persecuting me ever since I started believing in God. Now that I was sick, he wanted even less to do with me. I felt so desolate and helpless. At the time, I couldn't move or speak, but my mind was clear. When I saw my husband walk out, I couldn't stop the tears streaming down my face. I thought my husband would be there for me in sickness. I never thought he'd be so ruthless. I knew then that I could no longer count on my husband and could only rely on God. I just silently prayed to God, not daring to stray from Him for a single moment. I also pondered some hymns and words of God I had read. The hymn that left the deepest impact on me was called **"Peter Held to True Faith and Love": "God! My life is worth nothing, and my body is worth nothing. I have only one faith and only one love. I have faith in You in my mind and love for You in my heart; these two things only have I to give to You, and nothing else"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How Peter Came to Know Jesus). I sang this hymn to myself in my head, and thought about how I hadn't given myself to God in my faith and didn't have true faith in Him. I always wanted to rely on my family, but in my most vulnerable moment, the person closest to me ignored me. It was God who comforted me through His words and only He can save me. I prayed to God in my heart: "God, only You can save and comfort me, and give me faith and strength. I am ready to give my heart and life to

You.” I felt truly peaceful as I pondered the hymn of God’s words, and I stopped thinking about my illness and fearing death. Slowly, some warmth returned to my body, and before I knew it, it was already 1 a.m. After the blood transfusion, I felt good as new the very next morning. The physician on duty was shocked when he saw me sitting up in bed. He said: “You were in a bad way yesterday; I’m amazed you made it through the night!” When I heard the doctor say that, I gave thanks to God over and over. If not for the guidance of God’s words, I never would’ve survived. It was all due to God’s wondrous protection. After that, the physician sent me to the city hospital to run further tests. I thought to myself: God protected me through such a dangerous situation yesterday, so I’m sure they won’t find any serious problems.

The next day, I went to a large hospital with some family for further testing, only to find out that I was diagnosed with late-stage cervical cancer. The tumor was already as large as a duck egg and surgery was out of the question. I would never make it through the surgery. When I heard him say “late-stage cervical cancer,” I was dumbstruck and completely floored. I kept thinking to myself: “Cancer? How did I get cancer? Some unbelievers only live for a couple of months after getting cancer. Will I make it through this?” I felt anguished and distressed and didn’t want to talk to anyone. Lying in my hospital bed, I kept reflecting on my past ten years or so of faith in God: Ever since I accepted God’s last days’ work, I had been persecuted by my family and unbelievers even mocked and slandered me. Over these years, no matter what duty the church assigned me to, I would always submit. No matter how difficult or grueling, I would get through it by relying on God. Even when I was arrested, convicted and sent to jail, I never once betrayed God, and after I was released, I continued to spread the gospel and fulfill my duty. I’d already suffered so much and gone through

such rough times, so why did I now have a terminal illness? Why hadn't God protected me? Was my faith in God coming to an end? I just didn't understand and couldn't accept dying like that. As tears of grievance streamed down my face, I made my request to God: "O God, I don't want to die. If I die now, I will never see Your day of glory and the great red dragon's demise, and I will never see the beautiful vistas of the kingdom. I shudder to think what ending lies in store for me. O God, please come to my aid and heal my illness!" Just then, I thought back to the massive blood loss I'd sustained and how despite no one thinking I would survive, God had preserved my life, and I had witnessed His wondrous deed. With that thought, I wanted to get treatment.

Seeing how serious my condition was, the doctor recommended that I receive both radiation and chemotherapy. The chemotherapy made me nauseous and muddle-headed. It was extremely uncomfortable and my face would get really hot. During radiation, it felt like I was being pricked by needles all over my body. The pain of the two therapies together was unbearable, and I began to complain and misunderstand God again: It made sense that unbelievers who didn't have God's protection would get cancer, but I had faith in God, so how could I come down with this terminal illness? God hadn't protected me! My ward in the hospital was filled with all kinds of cancer patients and every few days a deceased patient would be carted out of the room. I was terrified, and worried that if my illness worsened any further, someday I would be the one carted out. I didn't want to be stuck with all the other cancer patients all day. It was so agonizing to listen to their painful groaning day after day. So, as soon as I finished my treatment, I went to a sister's home to read God's words. During my gatherings with her, I would actively share my understanding of God's words, and would discuss with her how to resolve the notions of potential gospel recipients. I

thought to myself, “Once I’m discharged from the hospital, I’ll continue spreading the gospel and doing my duty. As long as I attend more gatherings, eat and drink more of God’s words and have faith in God, He will surely protect me.” During my treatment, a relative of mine came to visit, and privately told my husband and children that her husband had died of cancer and that my cancer was incurable. She said that rather than spend money on treatment in the hospital, it’d be better to just take me traveling and not lose both me and their money. My husband took her advice and said he was taking me on a trip. He said we could go wherever I wanted. But my only thought was, “So they want to give up on my treatment? Won’t I die if that happens? Is this really the end for me?” I descended once again into anguish. A few days later, my husband refused to pay my medical bills. My sister said: “Your doctor said you only have two to three months to live, so stop asking your husband to pay your bills. No treatment can cure you now. Just rely on God—only He can save you!” Hearing this, I lay paralyzed with shock on my bed, not daring to think that what she said could be true. I only had two to three months to live? I felt absolutely devastated and tears came streaming down my face. The doctor had pronounced me incurable, and my husband and children had given up on my treatment. What was there left to do but wait to die? I had believed in God for so many years and suffered so much, all with the hope that God would save me from death and I could enter the kingdom. I never imagined things would end this way. I felt incredibly hopeless and that I was beyond saving. In the following days, I just went through the motions in prayer and was less enthusiastic about reading God’s words. I felt like I might die at any time and there was no use in praying anymore. I was feeling very pessimistic and negative.

One day when I was returning to my hospital ward, as soon as I opened the door, I saw a cancer patient lying dead in their bed with a white

cloth draped over their body. I was so scared that I ran into a different ward. That patient had only been admitted two days ago and was already dead. I feared that one day soon I too would have to face death, so I rushed to pray to God: “O God, I’m terribly frightened, negative and weak. I don’t want to die like an unbeliever. Please protect me, give me faith and strength, and let me understand Your will.” After prayer, I recalled a hymn of God’s words titled **“The Pain of Trials Is a Blessing From God”**: **“Do not be discouraged, do not be weak, and I will make things clear for you. The road to the kingdom is not so smooth; nothing is that simple! You want blessings to come to you easily, do you not? Today, everyone will have bitter trials to face. Without such trials, the loving heart you have for Me will not grow stronger and you will not have true love for Me. Even if these trials consist merely of minor circumstances, everyone must pass through them; it’s just that the difficulty of the trials will vary from one person to another. Trials are a blessing from Me, and how many of you come often before Me and beg on your knees for My blessings? You always think that a few auspicious words count as My blessing, yet you do not recognize that bitterness is one of My blessings”**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). God’s words were comforting and deeply moving for me. His words showed me that it is not a smooth and easy road to enter the kingdom, one has to endure some bitter trials. My illness was yet another trial and a blessing from God. I couldn’t lose faith in God, but I had to seek God’s will in this illness and not complain about Him, and I had to stand firm in my witness to God. After understanding God’s will I became less negative, and had the faith to rely on God to get through this. Seeing that God hadn’t let me die yet, I read more of His words in my spare time and gathered with that sister.

At her home, I would often read this piece of God's words, **"The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment."** One particular passage gave me some new knowledge of my views about faith in God. Almighty God says: **"You hope that your faith in God will not entail any challenges or tribulations, or the slightest hardship. You always pursue those things that are worthless, and you attach no value to life, instead putting your own extravagant thoughts before the truth. You are so worthless! You live like a pig—what difference is there between you, and pigs and dogs? Are those who do not pursue the truth, and instead love the flesh, not all beasts? Are those dead ones without spirits not all walking corpses? How many words have been spoken among you? Has only a little work been done among you? How much have I provided among you? So why have you not gained it? What do you have to complain of? Is it not the case that you have gained nothing because you are too in love with the flesh? And is it not because your thoughts are too extravagant? Is it not because you are too stupid? If you are incapable of gaining these blessings, can you blame God for not saving you? What you pursue is to be able to gain peace after believing in God, for your children to be free from illness, for your husband to have a good job, for your son to find a good wife, for your daughter to find a decent husband, for your oxen and horses to plow the land well, for a year of good weather for your crops. This is what you seek. Your pursuit is only to live in comfort, for no accidents to befall your family, for the winds to pass you by, for your face to be untouched by grit, for your family's crops to not be flooded, for you to be unaffected by any disaster, to live in God's embrace, to live in a cozy nest. A coward such as you, who always pursues the flesh—do you have a heart, do you have a spirit? Are you not a beast? I give you the true**

way without asking for anything in return, yet you do not pursue. Are you one of those who believe in God? I bestow real human life upon you, yet you do not pursue. Are you no different from a pig or a dog? Pigs do not pursue the life of man, they do not pursue being cleansed, and they do not understand what life is. Each day, after eating their fill, they simply sleep. I have given you the true way, yet you have not gained it: You are empty-handed. Are you willing to continue in this life, the life of a pig? What is the significance of such people being alive? Your life is contemptible and ignoble, you live amid filth and licentiousness, and you do not pursue any goals; is your life not the most ignoble of all? Do you have the gall to look upon God? If you continue to experience in this way, will you not acquire nothing? The true way has been given to you, but whether or not you can ultimately gain it depends on your own personal pursuit” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God). I also read this passage in God’s words: **“Apart from the benefits that are so closely associated with them, could there be any other reasons why people who never understand God would give so much for Him? In this, we discover a previously unidentified problem: Man’s relationship with God is merely one of naked self-interest. It is a relationship between a receiver and a giver of blessings. To put it plainly, it is akin to the relationship between employee and employer. The employee works only to receive the rewards bestowed by the employer. There is no affection in such a relationship, only transaction. There is no loving or being loved, only charity and mercy. There is no understanding, only suppressed indignation and deception. There is no intimacy, only an uncrossable chasm”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 3: Man Can Only Be Saved Amidst God’s Management). God’s words of judgment were like a sharp sword piercing my heart. It was

as if God was judging me face-to-face. I started to reflect on myself: After I became a Christian, I always sought to attain grace. I thought that as long as I put faith in the Lord, He would keep me safe and keep me from peril. After accepting God's last days' work, despite knowing that God did not heal the sick, drive out demons, and perform miracles like in the Age of Grace, but instead had people pursue the truth, and go through judgment, chastisement, trials and refinements to purify people's corrupt dispositions, I still clung to this extravagant desire to attain blessings. I thought that as long as I pursued my faith diligently, I would be immune to all disasters and diseases, and even if I did become very ill, God would protect me and not let me die. I enthusiastically expended myself in order to attain blessings and grace. No matter how my husband persecuted and obstructed me, or how my relatives maligned and abandoned me, I was not constrained by them. Even when I was arrested and jailed, I still didn't betray God. Once I was released, I continued to fulfill my duty. I thought that by pursuing that way I would be saved and would be kept. This time especially, when I thought I was on my last breath and God pulled me back from the brink of death when I called to Him with everything I had, I felt even more convinced that God would help me no matter what hardship I encountered. When I was diagnosed with cancer and my family gave up on my treatment, I saw God as my one last hope, and thought that if I continued to attend gatherings and read God's words, if I prayed more and relied on God, and fulfilled my duty as well as I could, God would see I had faith and had submitted, and might protect me and allow me to live. Through the revelation of God's words, I saw that though I could abandon some things, expend myself and do my duty so fervently, it wasn't the truth I was pursuing, and it wasn't to cast off my corrupt disposition and attain purity, but rather, I was hoping to trade my expenditures and prices paid for God's

grace and blessings, hoping God would protect me from death in the great disaster and I would arrive at a wonderful destination. When God protected me, I ceaselessly thanked and praised Him, but when I developed this terminal illness, I felt wronged, silently protested against God and even blamed Him for being unjust. In my faith, I just wanted to extract benefits from God and didn't see how important it is to pursue the truth. When I was faced with an illness that threatened my ending and destination, I lost my faith in God. I lost interest in God's words and prayer, and I even misunderstood and blamed God. I saw that I didn't have the slightest sincerity toward God or true love for Him, but was just using Him, cheating Him and "doing business" with Him. How could I consider myself a believer? If I kept pursuing in this way, even if I did survive, I would be rebelling against and resisting God. What value was there in living like that? Realizing this, I felt incredibly ashamed and embarrassed. I felt so indebted to God.

Later on, I read a passage of God's words that gave me an even deeper understanding. God says: **"Nothing is more difficult to handle than people constantly making demands of God. As soon as God's actions do not correspond with your thinking, or haven't been carried out in accordance with your thinking, then you are likely to resist—which is sufficient to show that, in nature, you are resistant to God. Recognition of this problem can only be achieved by frequently reflecting on yourself and reaching an understanding of the truth, and it can only be fully resolved by pursuing the truth. When people do not understand the truth, they make many demands of God, whereas when they truly understand the truth, they make none; they feel only that they have not satisfied God enough, that they do not obey God enough. That people always make demands of God reflects their corrupt nature. If you**

cannot know yourself and truly repent concerning this matter, then you will face hidden dangers and peril on your path of belief in God. You are able to overcome ordinary things, but when important matters such as your fate, prospects, and destination are involved, you will perhaps be unable to overcome them. At that time, if you still lack the truth, you may well fall back upon your old ways, and will thus become one of those who are destroyed. Many people have always followed and believed in this way; they've behaved well during the time that they've followed God, but this does not determine what will happen in the future. This is because you are never aware of man's Achilles' heel, or the things that are within man's nature that can come to oppose God, and before they lead you to disaster, you remain ignorant of these things. Because the issue of your nature opposing God goes unresolved, it sets you up for disaster, and it is possible that when your journey ends and God's work finishes, you will do that which most opposes God and say that which is blasphemous against Him, and thus you will be condemned and cast out" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

People Make Too Many Demands of God). After reading God's words, I realized that ever since getting sick, I'd been afraid of dying, and vehemently desired for God to keep me from death. Wasn't that making demands of God? I always thought that since I believed in God, He should protect me at all times, and shouldn't treat me like He would treat an unbeliever. After I was diagnosed with late-stage cancer, and I saw that God hadn't given me extra protection, I just couldn't submit. I used my sacrifices, expenditures, and suffering in jail as capital to argue my point with God and make stipulations, demanding that God cure my illness. When God didn't act according to my demands, I argued with Him and fought it. I realized that I didn't have the slightest reverence for God, despite believing all these years. I was so lacking in

humanity and reason. I thought of how Job revered God and shunned evil all of his life. When God tested him and he lost all his property, his children and his body broke out in boils, he never once complained about God or demanded that God heal him. Job was incredibly humane and reasonable. As for me, I became full of complaints and misunderstandings when faced with death, and unreasonably demanded that God protect my life. When my life was first in danger from losing so much blood, it was God's protection and care that saved me—He gave me His grace, allowing me to see His marvelous deed. What's more, in my years of belief, I had enjoyed so much of the watering and sustenance of God's words and learned many truths and mysteries. God had given me more than I ever asked for or imagined, but I still wasn't satisfied. When I was diagnosed with cancer, I made unreasonable demands of God, asking Him to allow me to live on. I realized that I had an incredibly greedy nature. God is the Lord of creation, so what right did someone as insignificant, rebellious, resistant and full of corruption as me have to make demands of God? I saw that I lacked even the slightest self-awareness, that I was unreasonably arrogant and didn't have the slightest reverence for God. When God's actions didn't fit my notions, I threw a tantrum, argued, and protested. What I revealed was a vicious disposition, and if I didn't transform my corrupt disposition, I would offend God's disposition and be subject to His righteous punishment. I was frightened and didn't dare make any more unreasonable demands of God, so I prayed to Him, saying: "O God, I thank You for Your judgment and chastisement, which allowed me to see how unreasonable I was. O God! I am willing to repent, and whether or not my condition improves, I will submit to Your orchestrations." Realizing these things, I felt a little more at peace.

Lying in my hospital bed, I wondered why I could make such unreasonable demands after I got sick. After reflecting and seeking, I realized it was mainly because I didn't understand God's righteous disposition. Later on, I read this passage of God's words: **"Righteousness is by no means fairness or reasonableness; it is not egalitarianism, or a matter of allocating to you what you deserve in accordance with how much work you have completed, or paying you for whatever work you have done, or giving you your due according to what effort you expend. This is not righteousness, it is merely being fair and reasonable. Very few people are capable of knowing God's righteous disposition. Suppose God had eliminated Job after Job bore witness for Him: Would this be righteous? In fact, it would be. Why is this called righteousness? How do people view righteousness? If something is in line with people's notions, it is then very easy for them to say that God is righteous; however, if they do not see that thing as being in line with their notions—if it is something that they are incapable of comprehending—then it would be difficult for them to say that God is righteous. If God had destroyed Job back then, people would not have said He was righteous. Actually, though, whether people have been corrupted or not, and whether they have been profoundly corrupted or not, does God have to justify Himself when He destroys them? Should He have to explain to people upon what basis it is that He does so? Must God tell people the rules He has ordained? There is no need. In God's eyes, someone who is corrupt, and who is liable to oppose God, is without any worth; however God handles them will be appropriate, and all are the arrangements of God. If you were displeasing to God's eyes, and if He said that He had no use for you after your testimony and therefore destroyed you, would this, too, be His righteousness? It**

would. You might not be able to recognize this right now from the facts, but you must understand in doctrine. What would you say—is God’s destruction of Satan an expression of His righteousness? (Yes.) What if He allowed Satan to remain? You dare not say, yes? God’s essence is righteousness. Though it is not easy to comprehend what He does, all that He does is righteous; it is simply that people do not understand”

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Through God’s words, I saw how I used to think of God’s righteousness in terms of my own notions and imaginings. I thought that I was a believer in God, had paid heavy prices, expended myself, suffered through prison without betraying God, and stood firm in my witness to Him, so He should protect me from a terminal illness. As for the unbelievers that God did not protect, it was normal for them to get cancer. I believed this was God’s righteousness. When God didn’t act in accordance with my notions and I contracted a terminal illness, I felt that all of my expenditures had not been repaid, that God had done me wrong, and so I was full of complaints and misunderstandings of God. I saw that my understanding of God’s righteousness was no different than the unbelievers’ transactional understanding. I thought I should be compensated for all my work, and it was unfair if I didn’t get what I was owed. After reading God’s words, I learned that God’s very essence is righteous. Everything God does is invested with His will and wisdom. I couldn’t evaluate my situation based on superficial appearances and notions. That would lead to mistakes, and I would be likely to judge and resist God. I thought that becoming sick was a disaster, but God’s will was behind that sickness. If I hadn’t been exposed through that, I wouldn’t have realized how lacking in humanity and reason I was. As soon as God’s actions didn’t fit my notions, I began to argue and protest. I wasn’t submissive and reverent toward God. The experience of

this illness showed me my true stature and allowed me to let go of my unreasonable demands on God. Thanks be to God! He has worked wonders and is truly wise! In the past, I didn't know God, and I judged His righteous disposition based on my own views. How blind and ignorant I was of God! God is the Lord of all creation, but I am just a miniscule, created being—He is right to treat me as He sees fit. What's more, I saw my faith as a transaction and made unreasonable demands of God. Even if I were to die, this too would be God's righteousness—I shouldn't have complained about God. No matter what God chose, whether I was to live or die, it would all be suitable. I had to submit to God's arrangements—this was the reason I should possess. After gaining some knowledge of God's righteous disposition, I felt a lot clearer, and stopped complaining about and misunderstanding God. No matter how God treated me, I didn't complain and was able to submit.

Later, I learned how to treat my own mortality by reading God's words, and I no longer feared death. God's words say: **"If a person has been in the world for several decades yet has not understood where human life comes from nor recognized in whose palm human fate rests, then it is no wonder that they will not be able to face death calmly. A person who has gained, in their decades of experience of human life, knowledge of the Creator's sovereignty is a person with a correct appreciation for the meaning and value of life. Such a person has a deep knowledge of life's purpose, with real experience and understanding of the Creator's sovereignty, and beyond that, is able to submit to the Creator's authority. Such a person understands the meaning of God's creation of mankind, understands that man should worship the Creator, that everything man possesses comes from the Creator and will return to Him some day not far in the future. This**

kind of person understands that the Creator arranges man's birth and has sovereignty over man's death, and that both life and death are predestined by the Creator's authority. So, when one truly grasps these things, one will naturally be able to face death calmly, to calmly lay aside all one's worldly possessions, accept and submit happily to all that follows, and welcome the last life-juncture, arranged, as it is, by the Creator, rather than blindly dreading it and struggling against it. If one views life as an opportunity to experience the Creator's sovereignty and come to know His authority, if one sees one's life as a rare chance to perform one's duty as a created human being and to complete one's mission, then one will surely have the correct outlook on life, will surely live a life blessed and guided by the Creator, will surely walk in the light of the Creator, will surely know the Creator's sovereignty, will surely come under His dominion, and surely become a witness to His miraculous deeds, a witness to His authority. Needless to say, such a person will surely be loved and accepted by the Creator, and only such a person can hold a calm attitude toward death and welcome life's final juncture with joy. One person who obviously held this kind of attitude toward death is Job. Job was in a position to accept the final juncture of life happily, and having brought his life's journey to a smooth conclusion and completed his mission in life, he returned to be at the Creator's side" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). "Job was able to face death without any suffering because he knew that, in dying, he would return to the Creator's side. It was his pursuits and gains in life that allowed him to face death calmly, allowed him to face the prospect of the Creator taking back his life calmly, and moreover, allowed him to stand unsullied and free from care before the Creator" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). Through eating and

drinking God's words I learned that my life comes from God. God dictates and arranges my life, death, blessings and misfortunes. I had no reason to make demands of God. Even if God were to have me die, there would be His will behind this. I had to face this in the right way, and that would be the reason a created being should have. I thought of Job who had revered God and shunned evil his whole life. Whatever situation he encountered, he could recognize God's rule and arrangements. He didn't complain, didn't misunderstand God, nor did he make judgments or argue. He was able to submit and calmly face his own death. I had to emulate Job's reverence for God, shunning evil and submitting to God's rule and arrangements. God gave me my life, so whenever He chose to take it back, I had to submit. As for what outcome awaited me in the afterlife, God would decide based upon everything I'd done in my life. God hadn't let me die yet, so I had to use my remaining time to repent, walk the path of reverence for God and shunning of evil, pursue the truth and dispositional transformation, and fulfill my duty to the best of my abilities. Having realized this, I felt much more lucid and less fearful of death. I also felt closer to God.

During that time, as I gathered with my fellow sisters, eating and drinking God's words, my state steadily improved. I still had four chemotherapy sessions to go, but the side effects were too strong, so I could only do radiation therapy. But I didn't find the radiation therapy nearly as painful as before. I knew that God had the final say as to whether I'd survive, so I didn't worry about my illness, and spent my free time pondering God's words and listening to hymns. After a little while, I began to feel better and better, like I was back to my old self. The other patients all said I looked so healthy that they thought I was a nurse. After forty days as an inpatient, I was discharged. During my next exam, the doctor said my cervical tumor had disappeared. When I heard the doctor say that the tumor

had vanished, I couldn't believe it and thought I had heard wrong. I asked the doctor again and he confirmed that it was gone. I was ecstatic. I couldn't believe that a tumor the size of a duck egg could just disappear. I thought of God's words which say: **"Man's heart and spirit are held in the hand of God, everything of his life is beheld in the eyes of God. Regardless of whether or not you believe this, any and all things, whether living or dead, will shift, change, renew, and disappear in accordance with God's thoughts. Such is the way in which God presides over all things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man's Life). Indeed, all beings and things are in God's hands. All things dead or alive are subject to God's sovereignty and management. They are all orchestrated according to God's will. Everyone said I wouldn't make it, even the doctor said the tumor was too big to be operated on, so I never dreamed that it could completely disappear. This was all God's marvelous deed! I was deeply moved, and felt in my heart that I was indebted to God. I was so rebellious and corrupt and made unreasonable demands of God, I wasn't worthy of being saved. But God did not treat me based on my rebelliousness and corruption. I am so thankful to Him for His salvation. After returning home, I continued spreading the gospel and fulfilling my duty, and my health gradually returned.

Later on, I came across another passage of God's words: **"A person's outcome or destination is not determined by their own will, nor by their own inclinations or imaginings. The Creator, God, has the final say. How should people cooperate in such matters? People have but one path that they can choose: Only if they seek the truth, understand the truth, obey God's words, achieve submission to God, and attain salvation will they ultimately have a good end and a good destiny. It is not hard to imagine people's prospects and destiny if they do the**

opposite. And so, in this matter, do not focus on what God has promised man, what God says about mankind's outcome, what God has prepared for mankind. These have nothing to do with you, they are God's business, they can't be taken, begged for, or bartered for by you. As a creature of God, what should you do? You should perform your duty, doing what you ought to with all your heart, mind, and strength. The rest—things to do with prospects and destiny, and humankind's future destination—these are not something you can decide, they are in the hands of God; all of this is ruled over and arranged by the Creator, and has nothing to do with any creature of God. Some people say, 'Why tell us this if it has nothing to do with us?' Though it has nothing to do with you, it does with God. Only God knows these things, only God can speak of them, and only God is entitled to promise these things to humankind. And if God knows them, should God not speak of them? It is a mistake to still pursue your prospects and destiny when you do not know what they are. God did not ask you to pursue this, He was just letting you know; if you mistakenly believe that God was letting you make it the goal of your pursuit, then you are utterly lacking in reason, and do not possess the mind of normal humanity. It is enough to be aware of all that God promises. You must acknowledge one fact: No matter what kind of promise it is, be it good or ordinary, be it pleasing or uninteresting, all is ruled over, arranged, and determined by the Creator. Only following and pursuing the correct direction and path indicated by the Creator is the duty and obligation of a creature of God. As for what you ultimately gain, and the share of which of God's promises you receive, this is all based on your pursuit, on the path that you take, and on the Creator's sovereignty" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Nine)). Through God's words I learned that my final

outcome and destination would not be determined through prayer and would not be gotten through bartering with God. Rather, God would determine my outcome based upon my pursuit, my actions and the path I have walked. But I hadn't pursued the truth and did not understand God's disposition. When I saw God bestowing people with a glorious destination, I thought that as long as I pursued diligently, fulfilled my duty, was able to suffer and pay a price, and continued to fulfill my duty no matter what persecution and hardship I encountered, I would be saved and would remain. These years, I had been ceaselessly seeking and striving for my outcome and destination based on my own beliefs and desires. I was walking the path of Paul. If I continued like that, not only would I not be granted a good destination, but I would be exposed and cast out because my corrupt disposition hadn't been purified. I have finally recovered from cancer. God did not let me die and has given me a chance to repent. This is God's salvation! I thought to myself, "I must pursue the truth and dispositional transformation in my duty going forward. I can't keep bartering with God for blessings. I must be a person with humanity and reason who submits to God. Whether the outcome God arranges for me is good or bad is for God to decide. What I must pursue is the truth and dispositional transformation."

Nine years have passed, and my condition has never returned. Through this experience, I've found that even though this illness threatened my life, God never wanted to rob me of my life or my future. God was using this illness to purify and transform me, reveal the impurities in my faith and transform some of the absurd notions I held. It also allowed me to gain true knowledge and experience of God's almightiness and sovereignty, have the right attitude toward life and death and submit. To me, this illness was God's way of bestowing me with grace and granting me salvation! Just as

God says: “If one really has faith in God in their heart, they first of all must know that a person’s lifespan is in God’s hands. The timing of one’s birth and death is predestined by God. When God gives people illness, there is a reason behind it—it has meaning. It feels like sickness to them, but, in actual fact, what they have been given is grace, not illness. People must first of all recognize and be sure about this fact, and take it seriously” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three).

100. How I Escaped the Constraints of Emotion

By Li Yi, China

In November of last year, I received a letter from a leader detailing how, my mother, a believer for many years, hadn't been attending gatherings properly. She was always busying herself with making money and when she did attend gatherings here and there, she would often doze off. She rarely read God's words, didn't listen to sermons, held the same views as unbelievers, and her actions were fairly clearly those of a nonbeliever. The church was reviewing her situation to decide whether she should be removed, so they asked me to provide an assessment. I was quite shocked, thinking: "Has the church leader made a mistake? At least on the surface, it seems like my mom has displayed some passion and enthusiasm in her faith these years. Sometimes she even helps out other brothers and sisters when they run into problems in their lives. Surely she hasn't gotten to the point where she deserves to be removed?" But then it occurred to me that the church always removes people according to principle and makes the decision based on a person's overall behavior and nature essence—it would never treat someone unjustly. My duties had taken me out of town for quite a few years, and so I wasn't sure how my mother had been acting in the church. I ought to first accept it and submit.

After that, I began reflecting on how my mother had acted when we were together. Whenever I would return home and ask her about her state, she would intentionally avoid my questioning. She also rarely read God's words or listened to sermons. She would say she agreed when I fellowshiped with her on the importance of reading God's words, but afterward, she would just return to her same habits. She didn't even attend regular gatherings to make more money. Despite my fellowshiping with her

on the matter several times, she failed to change her behavior, saying that she could only rely on herself to improve her fate. What's more, she would often get into arguments with my father over trifling matters. Whenever my dad took a harsher tone with her and wounded her pride, she'd become resentful, often cursing at my father like an unbeliever to take out her anger. She didn't listen when I fellowshipped with her on how to live out proper humanity, saying she couldn't help it. Later on, I came across this passage of God's words: **"There are some people whose faith has never been acknowledged within God's heart. In other words, God does not recognize that they are His followers, because He does not praise their beliefs. For these people, regardless of how many years they have followed God, their ideas and views have never changed; they are like the unbelievers, adhering to the unbelievers' principles and methods for interacting with people, and to the unbelievers' laws of survival and faith. They have never accepted the word of God as their life, never believed that God's word is truth, never intended on accepting God's salvation, and never recognized God as their God. They see believing in God as some kind of amateur hobby, treating Him as mere spiritual sustenance; as such, they do not think it is worth it to try and understand God's disposition or essence. It can be said that all that corresponds to the true God has nothing to do with these people; they are not interested, nor can they be bothered to pay heed. This is because deep in their hearts, there is an intense voice that is always telling them, 'God is invisible and untouchable, and does not exist.' They believe that trying to understand this sort of God would not be worth their efforts, and that in doing so they would be fooling themselves. They believe that by merely acknowledging God with words without taking any real stand or investing themselves in any real**

actions, they are being pretty clever. How does God look upon such people? He views them as unbelievers” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. How to Know God’s Disposition and the Results His Work Shall Achieve). Through reading God’s words, I realized that nonbelievers only verbally acknowledge a belief in God without ever practicing the truth. They are of a nature essence that dislikes the truth, and God has never acknowledged their faith. My mother had never remotely accepted the truth in her years as a believer and she believed, thought, spoke and acted just like someone without faith—didn’t that make her a nonbeliever? I should provide an honest description of her behavior. Then again, my mother had always supported my faith and, even when other family members objected or lashed out at me, she always protected me so that I could fulfill my duties in peace. She had also supported me economically throughout my years fulfilling my duties out of town. When I got sick, she took me to the hospital and trudged up and down the stairs to get me registered and fetch my medicine. Every time I came home, she’d buy me food and clothes.... I just couldn’t bring myself to write the assessment after remembering all these things. I felt so agonized and conflicted: “She is my mother and so my assessment carries a lot of weight. If I were to provide an honest description of her behavior, she’d be even more likely to be removed. Wouldn’t that be the end of her path of faith? Knowing I’d written about her nonbeliever behaviors would be heartbreaking for her, and she’d be sure to think I was heartless and ungrateful.” This thought was like having a knife put through my heart, and tears came streaming from my eyes. In the midst of my suffering, I prayed to God beseeching Him to guide me to take the right stance and stand by it.

I felt much calmer after my prayer. During that time, I happened to come across a passage of God’s words: **“You should know that everything that happens to you is a great trial and the time when God needs you to**

bear testimony. Though they may seem unimportant from the outside, when these things happen they show whether or not you love God. If you do, you will be able to stand firm in your testimony to Him, and if you have not put the love of Him into practice, this shows you are not someone who puts the truth into practice, that you are without the truth, and without life, that you are chaff! Everything that happens to people happens when God needs them to stand firm in their testimony to Him. Though nothing major is happening to you at the moment and you do not bear great testimony, every detail of your daily life is a matter of testimony to God. If you can win the admiration of your brothers and sisters, your family members, and everyone around you; if, one day, the unbelievers come, and admire all that you do, and see that all that God does is wonderful, then you will have borne testimony. ... Although you are incapable of doing great work, you are able to satisfy God. Others cannot put aside their notions, but you can; others cannot bear testimony to God during their actual experiences, but you can use your actual stature and actions to repay God's love and bear resounding testimony to Him. Only this counts as actually loving God"

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God).

Pondering God's words, I realized that having me write this assessment for my mom involved the truth principles. I should have accepted God's scrutiny and obeyed Him in this matter. Instead of acting according to emotion, I should have objectively depicted my mother's actual situation. But because of my emotional connection to her, I was reluctant to write the assessment despite being clearly aware that she had quite a few nonbeliever behaviors, afraid that she might be removed from the church and lose her chance at salvation. Wasn't I failing to take the right stance and bear testimony? I was unwilling to stand on the side of truth in my faith and

protect the church's work, and I even safeguarded my mother due to our emotional connection—where was my God-fearing heart? In the past, I had actively and enthusiastically dealt with those who were found to be antichrists, evildoers and nonbelievers, fellowshiped with my brothers and sisters on the significance of the work of cleansing the church, and spoken with the force of justice in exposing the negative things to protect the work of the church. Yet, in the face of my mom's issue, I was swayed by my emotional connection to her and was unable to act according to principle. I didn't have the least bit of the truth reality and my affections were too strong! Having realized all this, I didn't feel as tormented and got working right away on the assessment, sending it off to the leader as soon as it was done.

The next day, I read in a sermon that even if someone has been a believer for several years without seeking the truth, if they haven't caused any disturbances or disruptions, they can be temporarily spared from being removed. A ray of hope entered my heart. My mother just didn't seek the truth, but she hadn't caused any clear disturbances or disruptions to the church's work. In her particular situation, she probably still had a chance to repent. I thought it was possible the church leader didn't understand her situation. Perhaps I could write a letter emphasizing how my mother had been enthusiastically helping her brothers and sisters, or I could ask them to fellowship with her some more. Certainly, it would be better for her to keep rendering service in the church than to have her purged. I couldn't wait to write a letter to the local church leader, but right as I was about to start writing, I began to have second thoughts: "I don't have a good understanding of my mom's current behavior. If she really is failing to regularly read God's words and is dozing off during gatherings, wouldn't that influence the other brothers and sisters in the gatherings? Am I not just

writing this letter because I have an emotional attachment to my mom and I want to protect her? But if she really is removed, then she'll never have the opportunity to gain salvation." In my misery, I hurriedly prayed to God, asking that He guide me to understand my improper state and learn to refrain from acting on my emotions. After prayer, I came across two passages of God's words: **"What issues relate to emotions? Number one is how you evaluate your own family, how you react to the things they do. 'The things they do' includes when they disrupt and disturb the church's work, when they are judgmental about people behind their backs, when they do the things of the nonbelievers, and so on. Could you be impartial toward these things your family does? If you were asked to evaluate your family in writing, would you do so objectively and fairly, putting your own emotions aside? This relates to how you should face family members. And are you sentimental toward those you get on with or who previously helped you? Would you be objective, impartial, and precise about their actions and behavior? Would you immediately report or expose them if you discovered them disrupting and disturbing the work of the church? What's more, are you sentimental toward those who are close to you, or who share similar interests? Would your evaluation, definition, and response to their actions and behavior be impartial and objective? And how would you react if principle dictated that the church take measures against someone who you have an emotional connection with, and these measures were at odds with your own notions? Would you obey? Would you secretly continue to liaise with them, would you still be inveigled by them, would you even be prompted by them to make excuses for them, to rationalize and defend them? Would you fall on your sword for and come to the aid of those who have been kind to you,**

oblivious to the truth principles and heedless of the interests of God's house? This all involves various issues to do with emotions, does it not?" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (2)). **"Say, for example, that your relatives or parents are believers in God, and because of evildoing, creating disturbances, or not having any acceptance of the truth, they are cleared out. However, you are not discerning toward them, don't know why they were cleared out, feel extremely upset, and are always complaining that God's house has no love and is not fair to people. You should pray to God and seek the truth, then evaluate just what kind of people these relatives are based on God's words. If you truly understand the truth, you will be able to accurately define them, and you will see that everything God does is right, and that He is a righteous God. Then, you will have no complaints, will be able to submit to God's arrangements, and will not try to defend your relatives or parents. The point here is not to sever your kinship; it is just to define what kind of people they are, and make it so that you are discerning toward them, and know why they were cast out. If these things are truly clear to you in your heart, and your views are correct and in line with the truth, then you will be able to stand on the same side as God, and your views on the matter will be fully compatible with God's words. If you are not able to accept the truth or view people according to God's words, and still side with relationships and perspectives of the flesh when viewing people, then you will never be able to cast off this fleshly relationship, and will still treat these people as your kin—closer even than your brothers and sisters at church, in which case there will be a contradiction between God's words and your views toward your family in this matter—a conflict, even, and in such circumstances, it would be impossible for**

you to stand on the side of God, and you would have notions and misunderstandings about God. Thus, if people are to achieve compatibility with God, first of all, their views on matters must be in line with God's words; they must be able to view people and things based on God's words, accept that God's words are the truth, and be able to put aside the traditional notions of man. Regardless of what person or matter you are faced with, you must be able to maintain the same perspectives and views as God, and your perspectives and views must be in harmony with the truth. This way, your views and the way you approach people will not be hostile to God, and you will be capable of obedience to God and compatibility with God. Such people could never possibly resist God again; they are the very people that God wishes to gain" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Identify the Nature Essence of Paul). God's words reveal how those bound by their fleshly affections cannot practice the truth or impartially and justly evaluate their own relatives, much less act according to truth principles. Rather, they constantly protect, safeguard and defend their relatives, without the least bit of thought for the interests of the church. Through God's words, I came to have some understanding of my state. I was well aware that my mother's nature essence was that of a nonbeliever, and that she had already become a disruption to church life. I ought to practice the truth and expose my mother's behaviors to protect the work of the church. Yet I couldn't let go of my emotional attachments and worried that if she were removed, she would completely lose the opportunity to gain salvation. As such, I wanted to argue on her behalf and, especially when I thought of how good she had always been to me, I sought to protect her, guard her and not reveal her behaviors. After reading that sermon, I couldn't just purely accept the principles behind expelling and removing people from God's house, but

seized upon a loophole. I wanted the church to take a lenient attitude toward her and allow her to stay, so that perhaps she would still have a chance at attaining salvation. God's house does the work of cleansing for the sake of the church's purity, and to provide our brothers and sisters with a positive environment for church life free from the disruptions of Satan. Yet I let my emotional attachment get the best of me, protecting my mother without the least consideration for the work of the church or how this might harm the lives of my brothers and sisters. I was being so selfish and despicable! I had been thoroughly corrupted by Satan and lived by satanic philosophies such as "Blood is thicker than water" and "Man is not inanimate; how can he be free from emotions?" I thought that since my mom had taken good care of me growing up and supported me in fulfilling my duties, any amount of bad behavior on her part should be tolerated. As her daughter, I felt it would be very unfilial of me to just stand by and watch as she was removed. As long as there was the slightest bit of hope, I ought to fight to find a chance for her to stay in the church. Was I not flying in the face of God? In her years as a believer, my mother had never cherished God's words, consistently attended gatherings, or practiced God's words. Instead, she poured herself into the pursuit of worldly things and money, and even said: "I can't be bothered to seek the truth. Making money is my most surefire option." One time, after an old couple that had been believers for over a decade were removed for their wicked deeds and disruption of church work, she told the brothers and sisters, "Very few of us will succeed in our faith—they are removed. Sooner or later I will be, too." At the time, I fellowshiped with her about how the church removes people according to principle and based upon their general behavior and nature essence. I also told her that she was sowing negativity with such comments. Yet, she didn't reflect upon herself and seemed completely indifferent. I realized that my mother had never

accepted the truth in all her years in the church and didn't even have genuine faith in God—she was just a nonbeliever. I hadn't recognized her actual essence according to God's words, and even stubbornly clung to my own fallacious views. I believed that although she hadn't pursued the truth, as long as she wasn't overtly disturbing and disrupting things, she could continue to render service in the church and perhaps might still have a chance at salvation. I didn't realize that even though nonbelievers might not appear to be doing wicked deeds outwardly, their nature essence does not cherish, but rather dislikes the truth. No matter how many years they remain in the church, they will never achieve a transformation in their life disposition or attain salvation. God's work in the last days is to express the truth to purify and save humankind. If people do not love the truth, they will never be rid of their corrupt dispositions and sooner or later they will be cast out. I realized that I hadn't comprehended the truth and my views and beliefs were truly absurd. It also occurred to me that nonbelievers sow their secular ideas within the church, which are completely at odds with God's words and demands. Brothers and sisters with small stature who haven't comprehended the truth lack discernment; they may easily be disrupted and misled by such ideas. This may cause them to wallow in weakness and negativity, and in extreme cases, their faith may waver and they may depart from God. Nonbelievers are not members of God's house at all, they are not our brothers and sisters; they in essence belong to the devil Satan and are enemies of God. If they are not promptly cleansed from the church, they will only breed disaster. My mother had been a believer for many years, but she still didn't read God's words regularly, much less did she practice them. No matter how I fellowshiped with her, she still pursued worldly things and making money and disliked the truth by nature. She often spread her nonbeliever ideas and notions and disturbed church life.

Even if she were given another chance, she wouldn't truly repent. The fact that I tried to protect this member of the devil's ilk and wanted to argue on her behalf so she could stay in the church showed that I was truly thick-witted and didn't know right from wrong.

Later on, I came across another passage of God's words: **"God created this world and brought man, a living being unto which He bestowed life, into it. Next, man came to have parents and kin, and was no longer alone. Ever since man first laid eyes on this material world, he was destined to exist within the ordination of God. The breath of life from God supports each and every living being throughout growth into adulthood. During this process, no one feels that man is growing up under the care of God; rather, they believe that man is doing so under the loving care of his parents, and that it is his own life instinct that directs his growing up. This is because man knows not who bestowed his life, or from whence it came, much less the way in which the instinct of life creates miracles. He knows only that food is the basis on which his life continues, that perseverance is the source of his existence, and that the beliefs in his mind are the capital upon which his survival depends. Of God's grace and provision, man is utterly oblivious, and thus does he fritter away the life bestowed upon him by God.... Not a single one of this humanity that God cares for day and night takes it upon themselves to worship Him. God only continues to work on man, for whom He holds out no expectations, as He has planned. He does so in the hope that one day, man will awaken from his dream and suddenly realize the value and meaning of life, the price God paid for all that He has given him, and the eager solicitude with which God waits for man to turn back to Him"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man's Life). I was profoundly stirred by God's words.

God is the source of man's life and all that I have derives from Him. It was God that cared for me and nourished me into adulthood. After that, God graced me, allowing me to come before Him and accept the watering and sustenance of His words so that I could comprehend the truth, know the meaning of life and how to conduct myself and choose the right path. This was all God's love and salvation. God had ordained my mother to be my guardian and raise me in the material world—I should accept her care for me as it derives from God, respect her and fulfill my role as her daughter. However, when it came to matters of truth principle, I couldn't be influenced by emotional attachment, but I had to practice the truth and expose all of my mother's nonbeliever behaviors. Only that would be acting conscientiously and rationally, and according to the truth principle. If I let my fleshly affections influence the way I conducted myself, providing love, compassion, safeguarding and protection to a nonbeliever like my mother, without sparing the slightest consideration for the work of the church or how the church life of my brothers and sisters may be disturbed, sacrificing the truth principles to protect my relationship with my mother, that would be rebelling against and resisting God. Only then would I truly be conscienceless and ungrateful. After coming to this realization, I felt much freer and unrestrained.

Soon after, I returned home to take care of some affairs and checked on my mom while I was in town. That night, we chatted about her recent situation and she knew that she was about to be removed by the church. When I tried to fellowship with her, she just changed the subject without commenting. After seeing she didn't have the slightest regret for her actions, I was even more convinced that the church's decision to remove her was entirely in line with principles. Two months later, I received another letter from the local church leader asking me to further elaborate on my

prior assessment of my mother. At the time, I thought: “Could it be that my mom’s misbehavior isn’t serious enough to get her purged? If that’s the case, does that mean that, at least for now, she won’t be removed? Then again, my mom didn’t seem to have the slightest bit of regret when I fellowshipped with her two months ago. Should I tell the church leader about this?” As I went back and forth on this matter, a passage of God’s words came to mind: **“If you are someone who truly believes in God, then even if you have yet to gain the truth and life, at the very least you will speak and act from the side of God; at the very least, you will not stand idly by when you see the interests of the house of God being compromised. When you have the urge to turn a blind eye, you will feel guilty, and ill at ease, and will say to yourself, ‘I can’t sit here and do nothing, I must stand up and say something, I must take responsibility, I must reveal this evil behavior, I must stop it, so that the interests of the house of God are not harmed, and the church life is not disturbed.’ If the truth has become your life, then not only will you have this courage and resolve, and will you be capable of understanding the matter completely, but you will also fulfill the responsibility you should bear for God’s work and for the interests of His house, and your duty will thereby be fulfilled. If you could consider your duty as your responsibility and obligation and as God’s commission, and you feel that this is necessary in order to face God and your conscience, would you not then be living out the integrity and dignity of normal humanity? Your deeds and behavior would be the ‘fearing God and shunning evil’ of which He speaks. You would be performing the essence of these words and living out their reality”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Through God’s words, I realized that I must be mindful of God’s will when fulfilling my duties, preserve the

normal order of church life and expose those in the church who have revealed themselves as antichrists, evildoers and nonbelievers. Only in so doing would I be fulfilling my duties and responsibilities. I thought of how when Job's wife asked him to abandon God, he was able to stand on God's side and rebuke his wife as a "foolish woman." Job was honest, forthright, and had a clear idea of what one should love and hate. He didn't allow emotional attachments to influence the way he lived his life. I, too, should forsake my flesh, expose the truth as I saw it and remove nonbelievers from the church without delay. Realizing this, I wrote down all the behaviors I had observed in my mother the last time I went home. Soon after, I received a letter stating that my mother had been removed from the church. Several of her behaviors that I had detailed were mentioned. I was gratified that I hadn't caved in to my emotions and lost my testimony. I felt peaceful and grounded.

Through this experience, I gained a clearer understanding of how God decides who to save and who to cast out based upon their nature essence and overall behavior. This is a clear manifestation of God's righteous disposition. We mustn't let emotional attachments rule the way we act toward others, but should base our actions on God's words, the truth principles. Only this accords with God's will. I'm really grateful to God that I've achieved this new understanding and made these gains.



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